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Southwest Regional Development Commission

FIVE YEAR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

December, 2006



SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

During the summer and fall of 2006, the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) conducted a performance assessment to determine how well it had performed during the past five years. This assessment was performed as required by Minnesota Statute 462.393 Subd. 2, which states, "In 2001 and every five years thereafter the commission shall review its activities and issue a report assessing its performance in fulfilling the purposes of the Regional Development Act. The report shall address whether the existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest."

This report consists of information gathered by means of a survey mailed out to constituents of the SRDC. The information collected in these surveys is presented as it was recorded. Also included are written comments received during the survey process. Following the survey data presented are highlights of efforts of the SRDC over the last five years to showcase how the SRDC provides service in the public welfare and interest in compliance with the Regional Development Act.



The Southwest Regional Development Commission sent out a total of 200 Performance Assessments. Of these, the Commission received 55 responses or a 27.5% response rate down from a 34% response rate in 2001. The majority of the respondents did not indicate their connection to the SRDC but of those who did, 17 were County Commissioners, 12 were Mayors, 2 were Township Officers and 4 were City Council members.

A copy of the Performance Assessment Survey follows.



Focused on Southwest Minnesota

This questionnaire is designed to provide the Commission with answers to a variety of questions relating to the agency's performance and any changes you believe the SRDC should make in order to better meet your needs. We would appreciate it greatly if you would take the time to fill out the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope to the SRDC Office by September 1, 2006. Thank you in advance for your help. *Jay Trusty, Executive Director*

Phone: 507-836-8547
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Southwest Regional
Development Commission

Please provide any additional comments you may have:

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Questionnaire

General Information

Please indicate whether or not you are an elected official: ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, please indicate office:

☐ Mayor ☐ County Commissioner

☐ Township Officer ☐ City Council

If not, please indicate your interest or connection with the SRDC: _____

Satisfaction

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being very satisfied and 5 being not satisfied) please circle the number that indicates your level of satisfaction.

1) In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the amount of assistance which the Commission has provided?

1 2 3 4 5

2) In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the quality of assistance which the Commission has provided?

1 2 3 4 5

3) In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been to local units of government in helping the local units carry out their functions and responsibilities?

1 2 3 4 5

4) In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been in communicating local concerns to state and federal agencies?

1 2 3 4 5

5) How knowledgeable, in your opinion, is the Commission concerning your local government's problems and needs?

1 2 3 4 5

6) Do you feel the Commission is currently fulfilling its role?

1 2 3 4 5

Performance

For the following section, two separate rankings are requested. On a scale of A to D in the left column, please rank the importance of having a quality program in place to serve the needs of the citizens and local units of government in the region (A- The program is very important to the region as a whole, B- The program is very important to particular jurisdictions, C- This program is beneficial, D- This program is not essential to the region). In the right hand column, on a scale of 1 to 4, please rank the Commission's performance in its role in each of these program areas (1- the Commission is performing very well in this area, 2- the Commission's performance is good, but there is room for improvement, 3- the Commission's performance needs to improve significantly in this area, 4- the Commission should not be attempting to perform this service or conduct this program).

Importance of Program to the Region (A-D) Regional Commission Performance (1-4)

Area Agency on Aging _____

Develop/fund Senior Programs
Health Insurance Counseling Program
Rural Health Advocacy
Minority and Cultural Awareness
Aging Information and Assistance

Business Loan Packaging _____
(Subordinated debt financing/Revolving Loan Fund)

Community Development _____
Capital Improvement Planning
Census Data Center
Grant/Loan Writing
Community Assessments and Surveys
Grant Administration

Local Government Planning Assistance _____
Local Zoning Ordinances
Land Use Plans
Wastewater Management Plans
Workforce Development Plans
Housing Development Plans
Rural Health Services
GIS and Database Development

Economic Development _____
JOBZ
Grant Writing
Business Development

Energy Policy _____

Environmental Quality _____
Solid Waste Management
Pollution Prevention Activities
Feedlot Management

Housing Studies/Market Analysis _____

Information and Referral _____

Intergovernmental Relations _____

Legislative Issues _____

Transportation Planning _____

Water Resources _____

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being very satisfied and 5 being not satisfied) please circle the number that indicates how successful the Commission has been in meeting its following Work Program Objectives over the last five years.

Management & Policy Administration Objective: To propose, and amend, as necessary, the management policies needed for the efficient administration of the Commission.

1 2 3 4 5

Office Administration Objective: To provide administrative support for the operations of the Commission and its management committees and to provide informative reports, on Commission activity, to local units of government and the general public.

1 2 3 4 5

Development Overall Objective: The SRDC is committed to a continuous process of sustainable development planning and assistance to the Region's customers.

1 2 3 4 5

Intergovernmental / Agency Coordination Objective: To coordinate activities among various levels of government and local entities.

1 2 3 4 5

Legislative Objective: To communicate to the state and congressional legislative delegation various concerns pertinent to southwest Minnesota.

1 2 3 4 5

Social Services Objective: To build a proactive, comprehensive and coordinated system of advocacy and services that ensures the rights and benefits of all older people.

1 2 3 4 5

Transportation Objective: To continue coordination with Mn/DOT in the planning and development of a comprehensive transportation system in southwest Minnesota.

1 2 3 4 5

Satisfaction

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being very satisfied and 5 being not satisfied) respondents were asked to circle the number that indicated their level of satisfaction.

1) In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the amount of assistance which the Commission has provided?	Very Satisfied	8	16%
	Satisfied	22	45%
	Somewhat Satisfied	15	31%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	4%
	Not Satisfied	2	4%
2) In your opinion, how satisfied are most of the local governments and organizations with the quality of assistance which the Commission has provided?	Very Satisfied	11	23%
	Satisfied	22	46%
	Somewhat Satisfied	11	23%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	4%
	Not Satisfied	2	4%
3) In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been to local units of government in helping the local units carry out their functions and responsibilities?	Very Satisfied	11	22%
	Satisfied	19	38%
	Somewhat Satisfied	12	24%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	4	8%
	Not Satisfied	4	8%
4) In your opinion, how useful has the Commission been in communicating local concerns to state and federal agencies?	Very Satisfied	18	38%
	Satisfied	12	26%
	Somewhat Satisfied	11	23%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	4%
	Not Satisfied	4	9%
5) How knowledgeable, in your opinion, is the Commission concerning your local government's problems and needs?	Very Satisfied	15	33%
	Satisfied	15	33%
	Somewhat Satisfied	7	15%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	6	13%
	Not Satisfied	3	7%
6) Do you feel the Commission is currently fulfilling its role?	Very Satisfied	16	34%
	Satisfied	14	30%
	Somewhat Satisfied	11	23%
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	3	6%
	Not Satisfied	3	6%

Performance

For the following section, two separate rankings were requested. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of having a quality program in place to serve the needs of the citizens and local units of government in the region on a scale of A to D in the left column (A- The program is very important to the region as a whole, B- The program is very important to particular jurisdictions, C- This program is beneficial, D- This program is not essential to the region). In the right hand column, respondents were asked to rank the Commission's performance in its role in each of the listed program areas on a scale of 1 to 4, (1- the Commission is performing very well in this area, 2- the Commission's performance is good, but there is room for improvement, 3- the Commission's performance needs to improve significantly in this area, 4- the Commission should not be attempting to perform this service or conduct this program).

Area Agency on Aging: Develop/fund Senior Programs, Health Insurance Counseling Program Rural Health Advocacy, Minority and Cultural Awareness, Aging Information and Assistance.

<u>Importance</u>			<u>Performance</u>		
A	35	73%	1	28	58%
B	8	17%	2	11	23%
C	3	6%	3	2	4%
D	2	4%	4	7	15%

Business Loan Packaging:
(Subordinated debt financing/Revolving Loan Fund)

<u>Importance</u>			<u>Performance</u>		
A	23	50%	1	20	43%
B	15	33%	2	17	37%
C	6	13%	3	5	11%
D	2	4%	4	4	9%

Community Development: Capital Improvement Planning; Census Data Center; Grant/Loan; Writing Community Assessments and Surveys; Grant Administration.

<u>Importance</u>			<u>Performance</u>		
A	25	53%	1	18	38%
B	13	28%	2	18	38%
C	6	13%	3	5	11%
D	3	6%	4	6	13%

Local Government Planning Assistance: Local Zoning Ordinances; Land Use Plans; Wastewater Management Plans; Workforce Development Plans; Housing Development Plans; Rural Health Services; GIS and Database Development.

Importance

A	22	48%
B	18	39%
C	5	11%
D	1	2%

Performance

1	15	33%
2	17	38%
3	9	20%
4	4	9%

Economic Development: JOBZ; Grant Writing; Business Development

Importance

A	27	60%
B	15	33%
C	2	4%
D	1	2%

Performance

1	21	47%
2	14	31%
3	4	9%
4	6	13%

Energy Policy:

Importance

A	14	33%
B	22	51%
C	4	9%
D	3	7%

Performance

1	14	32%
2	15	34%
3	8	18%
4	7	16%

Environmental Quality: Solid Waste Management; Pollution Prevention Activities; Feedlot Management

Importance

A	27	60%
B	15	33%
C	2	4%
D	1	2%

Performance

1	21	47%
2	14	31%
3	4	9%
4	6	13%

Housing Studies/Market Analysis:

Importance

A	15	34%
B	16	36%
C	8	18%
D	5	11%

Performance

1	8	19%
2	18	42%
3	11	26%
4	6	14%

Information and Referral:

Importance

A	20	44%
B	15	33%
C	7	16%
D	3	7%

Performance

1	14	32%
2	19	43%
3	5	11%
4	6	14%

Intergovernmental Relations:

Importance

A	19	44%
B	14	33%
C	9	21%
D	1	2%

Performance

1	10	23%
2	22	51%
3	6	14%
4	5	12%

Legislative Issues:

Importance

A	26	58%
B	11	24%
C	6	13%
D	2	4%

Performance

1	18	42%
2	13	30%
3	5	12%
4	7	16%

Transportation Planning:

Importance

A	27	59%
B	11	24%
C	6	13%
D	2	4%

Performance

1	20	44%
2	13	29%
3	5	11%
4	7	16%

Water Resources:

Importance

A	19	43%
B	17	39%
C	7	16%
D	1	2%

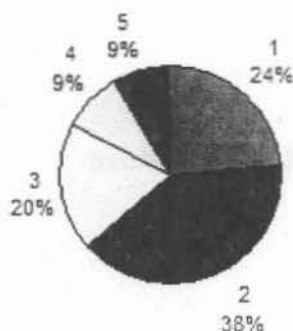
Performance

1	11	26%
2	20	47%
3	6	14%
4	6	14%

Success at Meeting Objectives

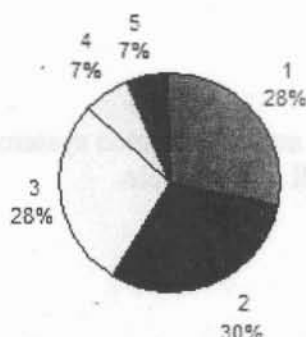
Respondents were asked to rate how successful the Commission has been in meeting its following Work Program Objectives over the last five years on a scale of 1-5 (1 being very satisfied and 5 being not satisfied).

Management & Policy Administration Objective: To propose, and amend, as necessary, the management policies needed for the efficient administration of the Commission.



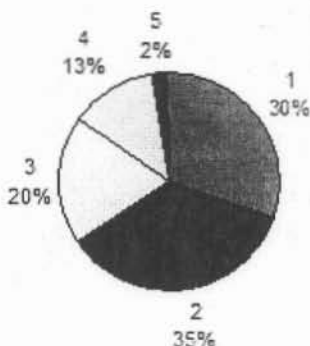
1	11	24%
2	18	39%
3	9	20%
4	4	9%
5	4	9%

Office Administration Objective: To provide administrative support for the operations of the Commission and its management committees and to provide informative reports, on Commission activity, to local units of government and the general public.



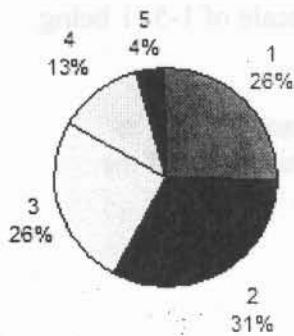
1	13	28%
2	14	30%
3	13	28%
4	3	7%
5	3	7%

Development Overall Objective: The SRDC is committed to a continuous process of sustainable development planning and assistance to the Region's customers.



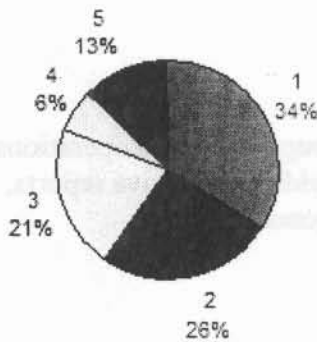
1	14	30%
2	16	35%
3	9	20%
4	6	13%
5	1	2%

Intergovernmental / Agency Coordination Objective: To coordinate activities among various levels of government and local entities.



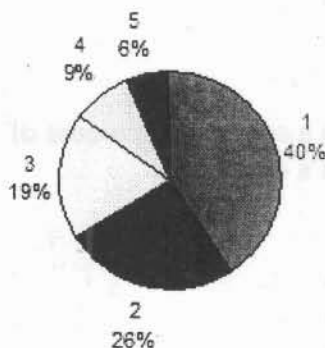
1	12	26%
2	15	32%
3	12	26%
4	6	13%
5	2	4%

Legislative Objective: To communicate to the state and congressional legislative delegation various concerns pertinent to southwest Minnesota.



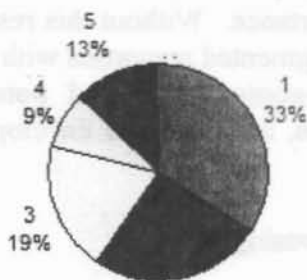
1	16	34%
2	12	26%
3	10	21%
4	3	6%
5	6	13%

Social Services Objective: To build a proactive, comprehensive and coordinated system of advocacy and services that ensures the rights and benefits of all older people.



1	19	40%
2	12	26%
3	9	19%
4	4	9%
5	3	6%

Transportation Objective: To continue coordination with Mn/DOT in the planning and development of a comprehensive transportation system in southwest Minnesota.



1	16	34%
2	12	26%
3	9	19%
4	4	9%
5	6	13%

Written Comments Received

- We need more recreational trails.
- I have worked with SRDC over the last 8 years in multiple capacities. The RDC does an excellent job in taking on new and emerging issues of importance. Without this resource local governments would have more difficulty and more fragmented responses with these issues. In addition, SRDC continues to carry on on-going "meat and potatoes" responsibilities the AAA, transport planning, SCDBG apps, and business development with a high degree of competence.
- Top notch agency, but have fallen down on one particular housing project.
- I don't think Walnut Grove has used your services much, but the Legislative problem the state forces small cities to comply with can't be done so the City can afford to do them. It takes all the money to try and it still is not enough. Also laws that say cities can do work but then can charge for it.
- In my opinion the Commission should not exist. It is just another layer of bureaucracy and lobbying. We already have city, township, county, state and federal government to deal with all the issues you propose to help with. Believe it or not, some folks don't want government or commissions to guide their every decision or function. It's no wonder we can't get people to run for office in our small towns. We are literally awash with red tape and do-gooder organizations like yours. Thanks, but no thanks. My opinion is my own. Del Gangestad.
- I wrote "don't know" or left a "?" in areas of the agency's function with which I have no experience-I am very pleased with the performance of the AAA staff in Slayton.
- We have been a little disappointed in the charges of the SRDC (too high). We also think the billing should be more detailed. The SRDC also needs to be more "transparent" to its partner. We basically want the SRDC to fulfill its current role and not expand into a more costly regional bureaucracy. Thanks for doing the poll.
- There are far too many organizations, public, private and non-profit, in the region which are duplicating efforts, working at odds with each other and giving "lip service" to many of the same principles but doing very little to actually move the region forward in a progressive fashion. Some need to go away, the rest need to refocus. The countryside council did that effectively in the distant past. It's time for all of us to rethink roles and refocus. Dump the excess baggage. Too many meetings, not enough action.
- I feel that the Commission is doing a great job. I'm too lazy to answer all your questions. I and the council have always been happy with your work and knowledge. Harold Schmidt
- Very tough to grade in all areas as I only see a couple of areas because of my work area, focus. Overall I think the SRDC is doing a good job. I have been seeing the SRDC services used more the last two or three years than I did before.

- I would like to "thank" the commission for all the learning (on my behalf) that accrued while I was on board. I learned a lot, met a lot of people, made some new friends and have lots of respect for the work that you do. Hats off to your staff. Mary Mulder.
- September meeting will be my first. I am not yet versed enough to comment on performance. Mary Meneely.
- I can't answer these questions because I really have no idea what this commission does other than the AAA.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS 2002-2006

Regional Labor Force Assessment

The 2000 Minnesota State Legislature funded a pilot program administered by the Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED) to complete nine regional projects to identify and evaluate the underemployed workforce and the use this data to support business development and job creation initiatives throughout the state. Other financial contributions were made by the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, Department of Economic Security, Alliant Energy, and member counties, cities, and local EDA's. The SRDC was selected as the grant recipient to study the geographical area of Regions 8, 6W and 6E. The study generated the three regional reports as well as seven county reports. There were 18 counties included in this area. The total population is 287,627 people. The random telephone survey of 3,711 households asked employment availability and history, commuting patterns, and educational backgrounds.

Following are some of the survey results of note for the study area:

- The majority of worker's pre-tax salaries are \$20-30,000 annually
- An estimated 24,310 people are underemployed by education
- The age 55+ category has the largest number of underemployed
- The top two occupational categories of underemployment due to over education were education, training, and library fields; and public safety and protective services
- Most would require a \$1-2.00 per hour increase in wages to change jobs
- There was an overwhelming majority that indicated their willingness to retrain for better jobs and/or greater pay
- A total of 21,440 non-working residents would be willing to find work if the right opportunity was presented
- Less than 17% of part-time workers reported working part-time involuntarily due to slack work conditions
- Workers cited their top reason for working part-time was preferring part-time over full-time employment
- In Region 8, 75% of workers commute 0-15 minutes one-way to work
- In Region 8, a worker currently commuting 16-30 minutes one-way would require an additional \$2.40 per hour to induce a 31-45 minute commute. 51% would not be willing to make a longer commute regardless of an increased wage.
- 81% of all jobs in Region 8 fall into less than 25 occupational categories

BNSF Rail Corridor Study

A railroad grade crossing study was conducted along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad corridor that parallels Highway 23 and crosses seven counties from the Minnesota border in Rock County through Kandiyohi County. Four Counties (Rock, Pipestone, Lincoln, Lyon) and the road authorities along the corridor in the Southwest Region were part of the corridor study, which examined the safety issues and accident history at the public crossings, identified the private crossings and made recommendations on safety improvements.

The Study was funded by MnDOT who contracted with SEH Consulting Engineers. The Southwest RDC participated by linking the local units of government to the study team, attending the study team site visits and reviewing the draft report.

Southwest CERT is Formed

The SRDC, through a grant from the United States Department of Energy and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, is working with the Minnesota Project and the University of Minnesota Sustainable Regional Development Partnerships to implement a Clean Energy Resource Team (CERT) in Southwest Minnesota. The purpose of the CERT is to give citizens a voice in energy planning by connecting them with the technical resources necessary to identify and implement community scale, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

CERT supports and encourages community energy. The Minnesota Department of Commerce estimates that Minnesotans spend \$3.5 billion annually for electricity. Nearly all of that leaves the state since our state's electricity comes, primarily, from coal and nuclear power (75% coal and 17% nuclear). Less than 5% of our electricity comes from the wind and biomass that are plentiful in Minnesota. Renewable energy projects create local jobs, pay local property taxes and are a new source of income for farmers.

RxConnect Implemented

In October of 2003, RxConnect was implemented. RxConnect connects Medicare beneficiaries with no drug coverage to free or discounted programs through pharmaceutical drug companies. Staff began using a software program through the Internet called Indicare to assist with computer generated patient assistance application forms.

Also in October of 2003, Region 8 became the call center for the 27 counties in SW MN covering the regions of 6E, 6W, 8 and 9. Currently the call center is staffed at 4.5 FTE. Two staff primarily answer the Senior Linkage Line® (SLL) Monday-Friday from 8-4:30. A collaborative SLL brochure has been developed. From January thru July 2004, the SLL handled 6,612 calls, of which 31% were from callers within Region 8. The SLL is used by many agencies as a place to call for information, for example, Social Security, Medicare, MN Department of Human Services, etc.

Prairie Expo Sold

On February 3, 2004, the SRDC officially sold the former Prairie Expo facility to Prairie Holdings Group, Inc. Prairie Holdings Group Inc., is a holding group for several companies doing business in Worthington, including Newport Laboratories, Propig.com and the Worthington Veterinary Medical Center. Prairie Holdings intends to use the facility as a corporate campus, bringing a number of their employees who are now spread out together under one roof.

The deal, which was reached through the hard work of local, state and regional officials and with the facilitation of the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation, involved the SRDC, Prairie Holdings, the City of Worthington, Nobles County, Independent School District #518 and the State of Minnesota.

It is hoped that the facility will become the centerpiece of a growing bio-sciences industry in and around the City of Worthington that will contribute to the economic well being of the southwest region for many years to come.

Hazard Mitigation Planning

The SRDC began working on Hazard Mitigation Planning for our counties by responding to the initial Request for Proposal from the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in 2002. Work on the first plans was begun in 2003.

During the 2005 fiscal year, there were three counties that completed draft plans. In late January, the FEMA reviewer notified staff that the plans had received approval pending formal adoption by the respective County Boards. Murray County adopted their plan on February 15th, 2005 with 26 cities and townships completing letters of support. The Redwood County Board adopted their plan on March 22, 2005 with 34 cities and townships returning letters of support. Nobles County adopted their plan on March 22, 2005 with 27 cities and townships returning letters of support. Also in FY 2005, Rock and Jackson Counties began working on their All Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Applications have also been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management on behalf of Cottonwood, Lyon and Pipestone Counties to receive funds to complete an All Hazard Mitigation Plan. A regional risk assessment is also underway combining the information gathered in the planning process.

Small Cities Development Administration

The SRDC has been administering two Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) projects during 2004-05. Carson Township, on behalf of the Delft Sanitary Sewer District in Cottonwood County was awarded \$120,000 to construct a pressure sewer system utilizing a sub-surface flow wetland for sewer treatment. This project provided 26 residential and 5 non-residential connections serving 48 residents. SRDC Staff also continued to administer SCDP grant funds in Avoca and Iona. These two Murray County communities worked together to establish a joint sanitary sewer treatment system.

Joint Wind Project

As part of a joint project between the Rural Minnesota Energy Board (RMEB) and the Metropolitan Counties Energy Task Force (MCETF), the SRDC and the RMEB hosted the Southwest Minnesota Renewable Energy Tour on June 22-23, 2006.

Highlights of the tour included: a stop in Redwood Falls at the FUMPA bio-diesel refining facility; lunch at the Midwest Center for Wind Energy sponsored by the Southwest Initiative Foundation; a tour of wind towers led by former Lincoln County Commissioner Jim Nichols; a stop at Dan Juhl's wind farm in Woodstock; an evening panel discussion in Pipestone and a tour of the Agri-Energy Ethanol facility in Luverne.

The RMEB and the MCETF are in the beginning stages of a collaborative effort to utilize the wind resources in southwest and south central Minnesota to provide cost effective renewable energy to County facilities in the Twin Cities Metro area. The SRDC provides staff support to the Rural Minnesota Energy Board.

Regional Transit Coordination Project

In 2005 the SRDC, in cooperation with Region 9 Development Commission, began working on a transit coordination project that focused on transit for the elderly. We held a Regional Transit Forum in December 2005 and individual County Transit meetings in February and March 2006.

The results of these meetings varied, several coordination issues were identified that were forwarded to the State Agency Transit Coordinating Committee. Some issues were county specific and follow up meetings were held as needed. Some of the results were: the opening of communication between transit and potential users; the modification of health care facility discharge procedures; changes in transit system route service. Some issues will require more work on the regional level, such as meeting with health care providers to improve the understanding of the relationship of transit / access to services and their facility. Differences in how rules and regulations are interpreted also create inconsistencies between human service agencies and transit. A regional summary as well as individual summaries are available upon request.

For 2007, we will be working on a continuation of the DHS CS/SD Grant by coordinating Elderly Transit Project work activities in Regions 8 and 9 with Western Community Action and the Region 9 Project Coordinator. The focus will be on working with the health care community to increase awareness of the need for travel coordination and the impacts making travel arrangements has on patients, and increasing communication beyond public transit system boundaries.

Also in 2007, the SRDC will be working on the development of a Public Transit and Human Service Transportation Plan.

The plan is to address the SAFETEA-LU (the Federal Transportation Act) provisions which require locally developed public transit-human service coordination plans and must be in place to access federal funds. The plan needs to address the following target populations: low income, disabled, elderly, and transportation disadvantaged individuals.

Regional JOBZone Administration

JOBZones are a tool designed to stimulate business activity in Greater Minnesota. Originally passed in 2003, the program was amended in 2005. An eligible business in the zone will operate in an environment nearly free of taxes. These tax incentives are intended to assist new and expanding businesses by lowering their overall costs, thus facilitating growth.

The SRDC acts as the JOBZone Administrator for the Southwest Regional JOBZone which includes 13 counties, 48 cities, 21 townships and more than 4,000 acres. Since the program's inception in 2004, there have been 38 completed deals in 15 cities in 11 counties adding 823 new jobs, retaining 579 jobs and spurring over \$100 million in capital investments.

Call Center is designated statewide Client Service Center for Medicare Part D Case Problems

Continuing our efforts to provide the best possible service to the elderly, the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging's Slayton Call Center was awarded a grant to provide Client Service Center services to Medicare Part D enrollees throughout the State of Minnesota.

Beginning July 1, 2006 the MN SHIP Client Services Center will streamline and create a centralized access point for all work related to Part D client needs with a particular focus on the needs of dual eligibles.

Revolving Loan Fund

As part of its economic development efforts in the region, the SRDC administers an Economic Development Administration (EDA) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The purpose of the RLF is to directly loan funds to assist start-up or existing retail, service, manufacturing and distribution businesses with fixed asset, working capital and real estate financing. Loans may range in size from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

In FY 2006, the RLF approved 8 new loans totaling \$389,700. These investments leveraged \$3,446,300 in private investment and helped to create 15 jobs and retain 34 jobs. The RDC RLF currently has 41 active loans totaling \$1,984,623.

City of Brewster Infrastructure Project

The SRDC assisted the City of Brewster in obtaining a federal U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant in the amount of \$584,813 for its wastewater treatment system improvements. These improvements were necessitated by the location of the \$55 million Minnesota Soybean Processors (MnSP) plant in Brewster.

The plant began processing 100,000 bushels of soybeans a day in November of 2004. It converts raw soybeans into oil, meal and hulls. The facility will initially employ 40 people. MnSP also built a biodiesel refinery at the processing plant site which went on-line in August of 2005 and produces 30 million gallons of biodiesel a year.

In addition to the EDA grant, SRDC staff worked with Jackson County to secure a Minnesota Investment Fund grant/loan combination for the same project on behalf of the City of Brewster from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The grant totals \$350,000 with an additional \$150,000 in a loan.

SRDC staff administered both of these grants. The total project cost for the wastewater improvements was approximately \$1.2 million.

Pipestone Pre-Treatment Project

In 2004, the SRDC was approached by the City of Pipestone with a project to build a pre-treatment plant to reduce effluent levels caused primarily by the discharge from Ellison Meats, one of the largest employers in Pipestone. The federal U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded the project \$741,000 as part of a \$1.2 million project. This project alleviated the discharge problems and allowed Ellison Meats to not only continue its Pipestone operations, but also to expand its employment. This project demonstrated the benefits of the public and private sector coming together to come up with a solution to a problem that benefits all.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we hope that we have clearly demonstrated by the results of the survey and through the highlighted projects that the Southwest Regional Development Commission has met the goals and intentions of the Regional Development Act, and is operating in the best interest of both the population of the region we serve and the local units of government we work with and for.