Visit with our Legislators — The day before the February Public Works Board meeting, several Board members met with a number of Legislators to discuss PWB legislative priorities for this session. These priorities are also included on page 4 of the 2019 Reference Guide:

1. The PWB seeks to protect the current stream of loan repayments and 1.7% state share of REET dedicated to the account, and strengthen the program by ending all revenue diversion (solid waste tax, REET, PUT) from the PWAA prior to the 2023 sunset in statute.
2. The PWB requests $97 million for our traditional infrastructure program.
3. The PWB requests $10 million for the broadband program, in support of the Governor’s Office.
4. The PWB requests an additional $5 million for the emergency loan program. (added at the January 2020 Board meeting)

Board members met with Representatives Orcutt, Dent, Bergquist, Ormsby, Tharinger, Cody, Gohner, Gergerson, Volz, Ybarra, Graham, Kloha, Wilcox, DeBolt as well as Senators Warnick, Hasegawa, Wilson, Becker, King, Mullet, and Stanford. One thing Board members heard over and over again was that legislators didn’t know that a utility or city in their district had applied for a PWB loan during the June/July 2019 application cycle. If you were one of the utilities that didn’t receive PWB funding last year, pre-construction or construction, we highly recommend you update your legislators NOW! Many legislators don’t know about the critical infrastructure needs in their areas so it is up to us to educate them. PWB staff prepared some good handouts to explain our requests but nothing says an issue is important like hearing from a constituent. Please consider contacting your legislator now and let them know about your infrastructure needs. Since most legislators were not accepting papers, all were emailed links to the 2019 Reference Guide showing all the great things the Public Works Board did last year as well as lists of the loan awards and applicants.

Russ Elliott, Director, Washington State Broadband Office — Russ shared his letter to the FCC (pages 9 and 10) and thoughts on obtaining funding for rural broadband. He explained that several years ago, after a preliminary broadband availability survey of our state, broadband carrier service areas were assigned based on lowest bids. However, these carriers may or may not actually be providing services in their areas. He noted that slightly more than 60% of the state can only receive broadband by satellite which commonly has slow speeds and is vulnerable to weather. Russ will work to make it broadband available equitably across our entire state. He’s got a big job ahead of him in his quest for federal funding, but he seems to have the energy and enthusiasm to do just that. We’ll keep our fingers crossed.

Dr. Lisa Brown, Director, Washington State Commerce – It has been a very busy first year in Ms. Brown’s new position (last year’s press release) as she spent of that time touring the state and listening to the needs of communities both large and small. At her first PWB meeting, she covered just a few of the items available in her first year review. With her past legislative experience, two terms in the House and seventeen years in the Senate including as Senate
Majority Leader, she has some valuable insights on communicating with legislators. This next year she wants to work on telling our stories, sharing the need for infrastructure funding.

PWB Staff Connie Rivera talked about the recent rulemaking public hearing on an update to the Washington Administrative Code to reflect several legislative and policy changes to the PWB. Board Member Pottinger sought clarification on WAC 399-30-020 (2) which requires a Capital Facilities Plan or something equivalent. Staff explained that as example this requirement could be met with a Comprehensive Water Plan that includes a chapter with either a Capital Improvement Plan or Capital Facilities Plan. As long as the appropriate section of the plan was updated at least every two years as part of a regular utility/city budget cycle, it would still be in compliance with this section of the WAC. The key here is that utilities/cities need to have some sort of capital budget adopted within the last two years in order to be eligible for PWB financing.

**Misc. Broadband Action Items** — Since the PWB’s Broadband Program was established less than a year ago, Broadband Program Director Shelley Westall has been working hard to ensure this program is able to fulfill its mission of promoting the expansion of access to broadband service in unserved areas of the state. This program is different from the traditional public works programs in that for-profit organizations are eligible for funding in addition to the usual governmental groups and non-profits. This eligibility expansion was included in the enabling legislation because there is often no incentive for carriers to provide service to some of the state’s sparsely settled rural areas. The Board authorized exploring a program to help Tribes apply for the federal award of unassigned mid-range spectrum, authorized another feasibility funding cycle to dispose of the remaining planning funding, and approved scoring criteria for future loan and grant application cycles. The Board specified that local planning efforts count towards the local match required for the feasibility grants.

**Lobbying Report** — Board lobbyists Mara Machulsky and Jim Rowland recounted what they had learned from the Board members’ lobby day on the Hill. As usual, legislators said they are receiving many funding requests, more that the funds available. Some legislators felt a lesser ask by the PWB might be more successful, but after discussion the Board stood firm with its request. With such a tremendous need for infrastructure improvements in our state, we cannot continue to reduce the assistance available to local governments. No news on our other three requests, but the Board and staff discussed different materials to help communicate our needs for infrastructure funding. There is concern that with last year’s loan awards for shovel-ready projects, it is likely those loan recipients will soon be drawing down the fund balance to very low levels, possibly putting our fund in the red. With that in mind, our lobbyists left the meeting and headed out for more visits with legislators.

**SYNC Report** — Board Staff member Buck Lucas updated the Board on the structure of SYNC and SYNC activities (pages 37 and 38). The representatives from the departments of Health, Commerce, and Ecology continue to meet and have expanded to include other strategic and tactical partners who deal with infrastructure in our state. This year SYNC will expand its outreach to let folks know about the different funding opportunities statewide. Already, SYNC will be at the APWA in Vancouver, AWWA in Spokane. Board Member Pottinger reported that Buck had done a great job at a recent AWWA Utility Management Training event, discussing the regionalization project in Lincoln County.
DOH Drinking Water Loan Program — Janet Cherry, DOH, shared the results from last fall’s DOH Construction Loan cycle. They were able to fund the 18 applications totally for just shy of 24 million dollars. They also awarded several consolidation loans totaling just over $2 million. Janet explained that DOH receives federal funding for its DWSRF loan program but a state match is required to secure the funding. In the 2019-2021 biennium, the PWAA covered the $11 million match for the DOH programs. This August they plan to offer a cycle especially for water main replacements that will be available only for those non-profit systems with under 10,000 population.

Upcoming Regional Trainings Program — Interested in valuable training for a variety of staff? Each year the Public Works Board holds four training events. The registration for this year’s events has just opened and more information can be found here: Dates and locations:

- **March 25**: Kittitas Valley Event Center; Ellensburg
- **April 7-8**: Green River College, Auburn
- **May 13**: Adrift Hotel, Long Beach
- **June 9-10**: Spokane Community College.

Our Vision — The Board continues to focus on and be inspired by its Vision Statement:

“As a leader in the nation, Washington communities are prepared with strong infrastructure to meet the challenges of the future.” How can we work to attain this vision unless we have funding to proactively keep our infrastructure strong?