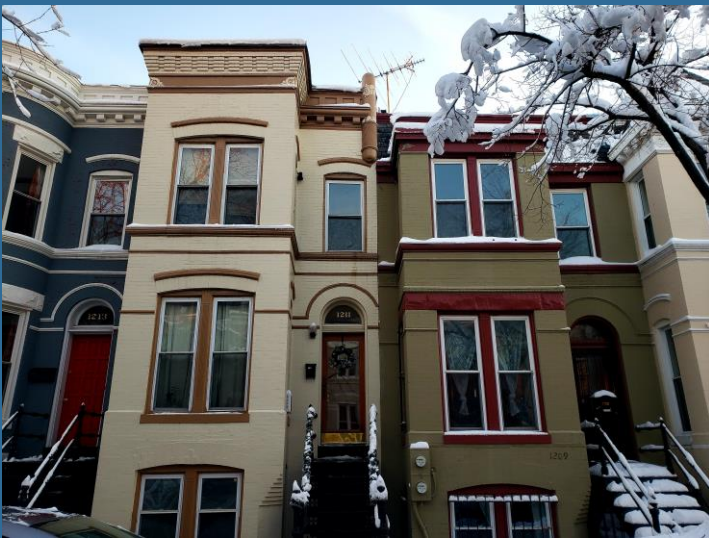


# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Supporting the region's transportation funding, housing, water quality, climate resiliency, air quality, human services, public health preparedness, homeland security, food security, infrastructure investment and incorporating local government input and equity considerations across all sectors

January 2025



Metropolitan Washington  
**Council of Governments**

## **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Adopted by the COG Board of Directors on January 15, 2025

## **ABOUT COG**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

## **CREDITS**

COG 2025 Legislative Committee

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# TRANSPORTATION FUNDING, PLANNING, & CONNECTIVITY

## Support DMVMoves Initiative's Funding Recommendations on State and Local Payments to Metro

In FY2025 the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia compact jurisdictions came together to recognize the need to reset the base subsidy payments to Metro to account, in part, for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on operating costs. The region is currently collaborating on the DMVMoves initiative to develop a shared vision for transit in the region, including dedicated funding for Metro and the region's transit systems. Recommendations coming out of the DMVMoves initiative will include funding recommendations such as resetting the subsidy levels to be carried forward into the future and consensus to annually increase these payments at a sustainable and predictable level in all three jurisdictions. With this new funding, there will need to be consistency and consensus among the three funding partners and a commitment from Metro to year-over-year growth limits. Given the importance of state funding in Maryland and the District of Columbia, and the existing shared funding responsibilities in Virginia, the states should continue to play a large role in contributing to the adjusted levels of subsidy payments. Additionally, while the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia have been matching the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) funds, these funds have not been indexed to account for the impact of inflation. State matching funds for PRIIA should be indexed to a sustainable and predictable level.

## Support DMVMoves Initiative on Stronger Coordination and Efficiency for the Region's Transit Providers

Over several decades there have been consistent recommendations made by a variety of commissions and groups to better coordinate and achieve efficiencies amongst our region's numerous transit providers. Through the DMVMoves effort, recommendations not yet achieved by the region though still considered priorities and deserving of implementation have been grouped into six categories: Integrate and align fare policies to provide consistent customer experience (e.g., transfers, youth fares, etc.); adopt shared service guidelines for when and how often transit operates and measure performance; improve wayfinding, customer information, and amenities at transit stops; implement bus priority strategies to get best value from high-frequency routes; explore shared use of resources and assets and grouped procurements; and make training, certification, and inspection programs more consistent across the region. Specific, implementable recommendations will come out of these workgroups that will likely necessitate legislative action at the local, state, and federal levels.

## Support an Indexed Federal Funding for the Region's Metro System

The Metro system is the centerpiece of the metropolitan Washington transportation system and forms the backbone of its economy. Almost half of all federal employees use the Metrorail and bus system to commute to work. The federal government should act to permanently provide a larger share of both operating and capital funding for the Metro system, which its employees and the region depend on. Specifically, support making the federal government's annual appropriations for

the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) permanent and index the funding amount to a sustainable and predictable level.

## **Support Fixing the Deficit in the Federal Highway Trust Fund**

For more than two decades the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) revenue has been insufficient to fund the congressionally authorized surface transportation program. These shortfalls have been closed with transfers from general fund and other short-term measures, including in the recent reauthorization for federal transportation spending through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The Congressional Budget Office projects that the balance in both the highway and transit accounts of the Highway Trust Fund will be exhausted in 2028. Support addressing this structural deficit and systemic imbalance of the HTF revenues as a top priority to provide certainty of federal funding for the surface transportation program and ensure that any fix to the HTF revenue structure retains all the programs included in the 2021 IIJA and fully funds them at levels authorized or previously envisioned.

## **Support Equitable Transportation Access & Mobility Solutions**

The region continues to strive to better understand the nature of transportation inequities through its analyses in areas such as Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) or disadvantaged communities identified under the federal Justice40 initiative. As part of the preceding priority to support the Visualize 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan, particular support is needed for those solutions that address disparities in disadvantaged communities throughout the region.

## **Support Funding for Next Generation Transportation Systems**

The need for a more efficient and safer means of surface transportation is imperative to help achieve the nation's safety, energy-efficiency, and environmental goals. Automated and autonomous vehicles and clean fuel vehicles including electric and hydrogen fuel vehicles, are critical elements of delivering safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable mobility. The private sector has made significant investments to advance deployment of vehicles using alternative modes of energy and technology. Significant public sector investments are needed to prepare transportation infrastructure to facilitate the operations of these advanced technology vehicles to realize the energy, environment, and safety benefits they offer. Support and expand the continuation of federal funding for building electric vehicles and other advanced technology infrastructure, beyond the term of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

## **Support Roadway & Pedestrian Safety**

Safety on our roadways and for our pedestrians and bicyclists constitutes a longstanding and unfortunately worsening challenge for our region, especially the recent tragic increase in pedestrian deaths. Increased regional support and collaboration for the “E’s” of safety is needed: engineering, education, enforcement, emergency medical services, and equity, in accordance with the Federal Highway Administration’s “Safe System Approach”. Additional resources, innovative practices and technology, and enhanced safety laws are needed to combat this crisis. Specific initiatives should include regional ticket reciprocity between Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia in order to improve the ability to hold drivers accountable for their actions across state lines; more effective traffic enforcement and penalties; and consideration of the safety of people outside of vehicles in vehicle designs, standards, and ratings. Vision Zero-supportive laws and practices across the country and around the world have shown success in reducing fatalities and should be emulated and adopted here.

# CLIMATE RESILIENCY & AIR QUALITY PROTECTION

## Support Policies to Meet the Region's Climate Goals

Expand policies, programs, and funding at federal, state, and local levels to help meet the region's medium- and long-term objectives in climate change mitigation. Ensure that local governments are recognized and given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on climate and clean energy policies and programs.

## Support Accelerated Multi-Sector Actions to Reduce Greenhouse Gases and Criteria Pollutants

The region and its member jurisdictions are committed to addressing the adverse impacts of climate change including reducing the amount of harmful greenhouse gases (GHG) released in the atmosphere. Support accelerated actions across all sectors to help meet the region's 2030 climate and energy goals. Support engagement and continued funding at all levels of government to monitor the impacts of climate investment programs and GHG performance measures. Emphasize priority investments in Equity Emphasis Areas.

## Ensure Sustainable Secure Energy Access for All

Advocate for state and federal actions to enhance access to secure, affordable clean energy. Prioritize and protect funding for energy-sector infrastructure to improve affordability, resilience and reliability. Support policies, funding, and incentives for energy efficiency and security improvements such as microgrids, district energy systems, and clean energy storage technology. Prioritize funding for upgrading energy infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and to protect investments in grid technologies that improve energy efficiency and system performance. Emphasize the need for deployment and workforce development in low-income, energy-burdened, and vulnerable communities to ensure a just and equitable climate future for all.

## Support Solar Deployment and Aggressive State Renewable Portfolio Standards

State requirements for a clean grid and aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) and support for local efforts to deploy distributed solar on government facilities and in the community at scale are effective methods of increasing the amount of renewable electricity generated within a grid system driving greater deployment of renewable energy projects to meet the region's 2030 solar goals. Protect existing and advocate for more aggressive policies, including state RPS and other innovative policies and programs, business models, and funding opportunities that support meeting the RPS, such as supporting a strong Renewable Energy Credit (REC) market, solar carve-outs in RPS policies, reasonable solar interconnection standards, offshore wind, community choice aggregation, and community solar opportunities for energy-burdened households.

## Expand Clean Energy Innovation, Technology & Finance

Encourage and support investment in energy innovation across sectors to increase energy efficiency and transition to clean and distributed energy sources. Expand options for and improve access to clean energy finance at the state and local levels, including advocating for further investment in and deployment of capital through green banks. Foster cost effective and efficient market frameworks, reasonable regulatory frameworks, business model innovation incentives and partnerships that

expand the adoption of energy efficient and zero energy building codes, building benchmarking, clean energy technologies and infrastructure, and low or zero-emission vehicles.

## **Support Aggressive Energy Efficiency Goals**

Encourage and support federal, state, and local energy efficiency programs to reduce energy usage, costs, and associated greenhouse gas emissions. Advocate for aggressive initiatives to target households with high energy burdens. Prioritize support and incentives for weatherization, deep energy retrofits, building electrification and retro-commissioning programs to achieve the highest possible energy performance and preferably zero energy buildings within Equity Emphasis Areas and climate vulnerable communities of concern. Support policies and programs to address energy demand growth from high electricity use sectors such as data centers.

## **Enhance Incentives & Financing Mechanisms for Climate Resiliency**

Support legislation, incentives, financing, and funding mechanisms to support deployment of grey blue, and green infrastructure resilient to extreme heat, flooding, and other climate hazards. Priority resilient infrastructure initiatives include the establishment of resilience hubs in climate vulnerable communities, improving the resilience of critical infrastructure (transportation, communication, energy and water system assets), equitably addressing urban heat island, enhance green infrastructure networks, providing for tree planting and preservation on privately owned lands, and implementing measures to reduce flood risk in climate vulnerable communities, such as restoring wetlands and enhancing green infrastructure to augment and improve stormwater management.

## **Support Policies that Preserve & Protect Regional Air Quality and Public Health**

Support strong policies, regulations, and funding necessary to preserve improvements in air quality and strengthen the region's ability to meet current and future air quality standards that are protective of public health and welfare. Advocate for federal policies that support measures to mitigate the effects of wildfire risks on regional air quality. Consider environmental justice when implementing air quality policies, programs, and initiatives. Support funding for local member efforts to identify and implement initiatives to reduce air pollution. Support regulatory actions to monitor and reduce air pollution transport into the region.

# **WATER QUALITY PROTECTION**

## **Support Investments in Water Infrastructure & Water Quality Protection**

Support appropriating the full authorized funding levels for water, wastewater, stormwater, and water reuse programs, including the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRFs, the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) and for state programs including grants for local governments and water utilities, and stormwater local assistance funds. Specifically, COG supports full federal funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Backup Water Supply Feasibility Study authorized in Public Law 117-263, Division H, Section 8201(a)(14). In addition, COG supports funding state revolving funds (SRFs) at the maximum authorization in federal law and making sure that funding for congressionally directed spending projects is in addition to the authorized SRF funding levels. Ensure that local water infrastructure investments to meet water quality permit load allocations and handle future population and economic growth are protected, specifically in revisions to the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in 2025. Invest in workforce training and development to ensure the availability of skilled workers to fill water sector jobs. Support funding for agricultural conservation programs.

## **Support Climate & Resiliency Initiatives**

Support funding and policy to address robust scientific climate change analysis, adaptation and resiliency planning and coordinated local best practices for flood control, drought, and water storage and reuse. Support drinking water security and resiliency through research, planning, programs and funding to ensure a resilient, reliable, and clean drinking water supply for the region.

## **Ensure Regulatory Feasibility & Flexibility**

Support actions that provide for flexible implementation and a feasible pace for future stormwater, water, and wastewater permits and other regulatory requirements, including reasonable reporting requirements. Support cost-effective scheduling and financing of water quality programs including streamlining permits, flexibility to achieve nutrient and sediment reduction across wastewater, stormwater, and other sectors to protect affordability of water. For PFAS regulation, COG supports policies that enforce the "polluter pays" principle for PFAS cleanup, ensuring those responsible for contamination are held accountable. In addition, COG supports an explicit legislative exemption from liability under CERCLA (Superfund) for water and wastewater systems, which are passive receivers of these pollutants.

## **Ensure Local Government Input**

Ensure that local governments and wastewater and drinking water utilities are given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on revisions to the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement in 2025, as well as legislation and management decisions affecting the Chesapeake Bay and local water quality.



## **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES**

### **Support Efforts to Equitably Increase the Supply of Housing & Promote Housing Affordability**

Support legislation and programs (such as the 2023-2024 provisions of the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act and Neighborhood Homes Investment Act) to preserve and increase the supply of housing and housing choices to address the full spectrum of need in our region. Ensure that a sufficient supply of housing is preserved and produced as outlined in COG's 2030 Regional Housing Initiative targets including a diverse range of housing unit types, sizes and price points that are affordable (both rental and homeownership) for our residents in the region's identified Activity Centers and Equity Emphasis Areas. Support efforts to eliminate barriers to the production of fair and affordable housing by encouraging new financing tools (for builders and buyers), streamlining development processes, and creating innovative regulatory reforms, such as adaptive re-use of commercial space, that results in the production of a greater variety of housing types and eliminate exclusionary zoning practices. Support legislation, policies, and practices that increase access to opportunity, reverse segregation, and create inclusive communities in concert with efforts to increase supply overall.

### **Support Efforts to Prevent & End the Experience of Homelessness**

Work with federal, state, and local Continuums of Care throughout the region to ensure that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring through implementation of a racial equity - informed "Housing First" approach. Support increasing the supply of deeply affordable and supportive housing with wrap-around services that promote housing stability and independent living, including strategies listed above. Voice the need for additional HUD funding for Housing Choice Vouchers to meet the need for permanent housing options as well as robust state and federal resources for local governments to provide necessary supports, such as case management, housing counseling, and navigator services to protect vulnerable residents. Support legislation such as the Housing Alignment and Coordination of Critical and Effective Supportive Health Services Act (ACCESS) to align housing and health care resources and clarify how federal funds can be used by homeless services providers to build their infrastructure to bill Medicaid for reimbursement. Support funding for financial rental assistance and legal aid to tenants, landlords, and moderate-income homeowners to prevent a significant increase in evictions and people experiencing homelessness.

### **Support Alignment of Workforce Development & Job Creation**

Support federal legislation to focus on workforce development and job creation at the local level, and efforts to develop industry standard credentialing and skills programs for sectors experiencing job growth in the region. Support legislation and programs that fund local job development, career and technical education, and overall, more closely align education and job creation.

### **Support Local Governments & Activity Centers**

Work with local governments to support sound land use planning which focuses on employer retention and new job growth in the region's mixed-use Activity Centers.

# **HOMELAND SECURITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

## **Support Funding for Public Health Response**

Support funding for public health to prevent, prepare for, and respond to public health emergencies and pandemics. Leverage new and existing funding mechanisms that would provide resources to carry out public health surveillance, reporting, infection control, vaccine distribution, laboratory testing, mass care, planning and exercises, communications and other public health activities. Invest in an adequate workforce capacity and capability to support public health infrastructure. Enact and support the development of more secure supply chain networks, with a focus on vulnerable populations, as it relates to personal protective equipment (PPE) and other life safety equipment used in the response of pandemics.

## **Support Cybersecurity Preparedness Initiatives**

Support cybersecurity programs and initiatives that advance and improve cyber preparedness and response to current and emerging threats. Work with local and state partners to develop resiliency against future cybersecurity attacks and other virtual threats targeted at our citizens and the information technology infrastructure of our communities.

## **Support Regional Emergency Preparedness**

Continue to support emergency response preparedness programs that advance and improve response preparedness to existing and emerging threats. Work with local and state partners to maximize the region's share of federal grant funds and use these funds to promote value added outcomes that continue to increase capacity, capability, and developed standards for regional response in the National Capital Region.

## **Increase Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Funding**

The National Capital Region (NCR) receives UASI funding for efforts to address the multi-discipline planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and to assist in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism using the whole community approach. As funding allocations are assessed, policy makers should recognize the complexity of challenges in the NCR that directly impact Federal government operations and security and support an increase in UASI funding to our region to effectively address the unique nexus of U.S. Federal, state, local, and international operations.

## **Support Resources for Violent Crime Reduction**

Provide resources at the local, state and federal level to support the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies to prevent, intervene in, and respond to violent crime. Specifically, gun violence and the associated trauma inflicted on communities. Continue to provide Department of Justice grant funding to support violent crime reduction efforts at the local level.

## **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

### **Support Efforts to Combat Substance Use Disorders**

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase resources to combat substance use disorders for all ages throughout the region which may include improving access to treatment and recovery services, promoting prevention education, reducing the stigma of drug disorders, supporting research on pain management, protecting harm reduction strategies, and ensuring awareness of overdose-reversing drugs.

### **Support Health Equity and Health Disparity Reduction**

Support ongoing system reform that advances health equity and reduces health disparities, especially in maternal health outcomes. Health equity is the goal that every person is equally able to live a healthy life regardless of their background or circumstances. Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged racial, ethnic, and other population groups and communities. Ensure timely access to care for the health of all residents and the reduction of disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality by enacting policies that will assist counties in improving maternal health outcomes.

### **Increase Availability of and Access to Mental Health Services**

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase access to and availability of mental and behavioral health services, especially for youth, throughout the region. Include psychiatric hospital beds, counseling, telehealth, and other outpatient services; support culturally competent providers from diverse backgrounds; develop communication strategies to combat mental health stigma and promote mental wellness throughout communities. Continue expansion of crisis intervention, mental health courts, and diversion programs, where treatment is indicated rather than incarceration, especially for at-risk youth; and re-entry programs to reduce recidivism rates of mental health consumers.

### **Promote Family Preservation and Avoid Family Separation Due to Citizenship Status**

Work with local partners to prioritize efforts that prevent family separation due to deportation or citizenship status. Advocate for policies that safeguard families of varying citizenship status by promoting alternatives to family separation and ensuring their placement within supportive family or community settings when separation is unavoidable. Emphasize strategies to strengthen family preservation services. Collaborate with child welfare systems to maximize funding and resources to address the increased caseload resulting from family separations, ensuring children have access to critical support services and stable placements during these challenging transitions.

### **Increase Recruitment and Support for Foster Children and Resource Parents**

Support initiatives to address the critical shortage of resource parents by enhancing recruitment efforts and providing adequate support and resources to retain them. This includes offering targeted community outreach efforts to raise awareness of the need for foster families. Increase recruitment tools by promoting collaboration among jurisdictions to share events, resources, and best practices that effectively engage potential resource parents.

## **FOOD SECURITY & HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS**

### **Strengthen Programs that Support Childhood Nutrition & Well-being**

Use federal, state, and local legislative efforts to make access to school meals free for all students. Extend, expand, and simplify programs such as Summer EBT and the Summer Meals Program. Enhance and expand the Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program. Support supplemental, non-diversionary funding for other policies which reduce childhood poverty and food insecurity, including local, state, and federal Child Tax Credits. Strengthen farm-to-school programs and investments to connect the region's farmers with schools and childcare facilities. Support policies to provide and promote healthier food and drink options for children in retail and institutional settings.

### **Improve Food Security & Healthy Food Access**

Support federal, state and local initiatives/investments to increase food and flexible cash assistance to residents in need, including children and their families, college students, adults, and seniors. Increase participation in federal benefit programs, streamline program administration and promote regional collaboration. Support and evaluate innovative initiatives to serve residents not eligible for federal programs to address the gap between cost of living and wages. Make permanent funding increases to SNAP to address food inflation and participants' nutritional needs, including reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Support culturally responsive policies and practices that protect the dignity and safety of food assistance recipients from immigrant communities. Support revenue generation policies to fund supplemental benefits for SNAP recipients at the local and state level, including leveraging tax policies such as an extreme wealth tax. Support the on-going modernization of SNAP to include increasing information security for SNAP participants and decreasing the incidence of SNAP outages. Create a means to replace funds for participants experiencing fraud or theft. Enhance SNAP acceptance among small and or local vendors through technology innovation and dissemination. Support policies and investments that address disparities in wealth and rates of food insecurity in people of color, including Black and Hispanic/Latino households. Increase investments in programs that improve access to local and regional healthy food, including access on college campuses, at food banks and pantries, farmers markets and CSAs, food hubs, grocery, point-of-choice initiatives, and in food as medicine programs. Promote the use of publicly owned lands for community food production, including food forests and community gardens. Recognize the hunting and fishing rights, as well as other food security priorities of indigenous people.

### **Support Small Farmers & Food System Resilience**

Address issues such as Heirs Property which contributes to loss of land and intergenerational wealth among low-income individuals through advocacy and stakeholder education. Support local government efforts to increase farmland preservation, protect agricultural soils, and support programs that facilitate land transition to the next generation of small farmers. Promote and expand successful new and beginning farmer training programs and access to resources to support new farm businesses. Center the unique experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in legislative proposals, and policy and program development to facilitate greater access to land ownership, capital, and markets. Support resources and policies that promote values-based group purchasing and institutional procurement initiatives from the region's farms. Invest in farmland protection and access, regional food system infrastructure, research, and capacity to increase resiliency. Prioritize funding and simplify processes to streamline payment and processing of benefit programs for farmers.

## **Support Local Food Entrepreneurs, Businesses, & Workforce Development**

Strengthen programs that support entrepreneurialism, cooperative development, workforce development, and living wages in the regional food economy. Invest in local business development and ownership and target those investments to help address long-standing food system inequities faced by communities of color. Create career pipelines for food and agriculture workers and improve the health and safety of work environments. Invest in regional food production and distribution infrastructure to support small businesses including subsidized regional commercial kitchen space.

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