

# METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## Board of Directors

### Policy Focus and Priorities for 2007

#### COG Board of Directors Leadership – 2007

Chairman Vincent C. Gray, Council of the District of Columbia

Vice Chairman Michael Knapp, Montgomery County Council

Vice Chairman Penelope Gross, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

#### Background

COG's Vision: The members of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) envision the National Capital Region as the best place to live, work, play and learn.

COG's Mission: COG fosters regionalism – by promoting regional partnerships, developing best practices, applying cutting-edge technologies, and providing a forum for discussion and decision-making. The COG Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing COG's mission and implementing its work program and activities.

The most challenging issues facing the metropolitan Washington region require a long-term vision and commitment to action. As a voluntary association of local governments, COG educates area policy officials as to the regional challenges and identifies and encourages the implementation of solutions built around consensus. While COG has an impressive record of achievement using this approach, solutions are not often easily reached and rarely can be completed in the one-year term of office for its policy boards and committees.

Beginning in 2004, the COG Board of Directors committed to a **multi-year policy focus on growth and development**. The foundation for this policy focus is COG's adopted Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies centered on growth issues. This focus does not preclude COG's leadership and involvement on a wide-range of policies and programs; rather, it is intended to help provide a framework for potentially disconnected actions and better organize COG's ongoing and new work. This focus also complements and leverages the priorities and activities of COG's two independent policy boards, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

*Goal: Promote balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities.*

*Strategies: Identify and disseminate best management principles, practices, and policies for sustainable growth and livable communities; establish regional consensus on principles, practices and policies for sustainable growth and livable communities; and facilitate dialogue among competing stakeholders.*

The adopted policy focus embraces partnerships with organizations and stakeholders with varied perspectives on this issue. The policy focus also acknowledges that there is no "one size fits all" approach to balanced, sustainable growth, and that COG's efforts in this area will address the needs of core, inner suburban and outer suburban jurisdictions. However, COG believes that sharing information, challenging past assumptions, and educating public officials on best practices and new growth and development tools holds great promise for the balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities we seek.

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#### **Policy Focus and Priorities – New for 2007**

##### ***Regional Housing Continuum***

Almost since its inception, affordable housing has been a policy focus for COG. In more recent years, COG launched the Washington Area Housing Partnership to complement its work centered on local government planning and housing and community development agencies. The Partnership published a well-received compendium of affordable housing best practices in late 2005 and sponsored several outreach workshops throughout 2006. At COG's December 2006 annual membership meeting, former HUD Secretary Cisneros challenged COG members to re-examine their regional and local housing policies to address a seven-point housing continuum, ranging from shelters and transitional housing for the homeless to move-up and long-term homeownership. Affordable housing is closely linked to overall regional growth and development policies and the absence of affordable housing near regional employment centers exacerbates transportation congestion.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- Committee review of COG's 2001 affordable housing policy action.
- Compendium of each COG jurisdiction's current status/action on seven-point continuum.
- Examine the regional distribution of affordable housing and unmet needs.
- Develop policy goals and strategies for action by the COG Board of Directors using Secretary Cisneros' seven-point housing continuum as a framework.

##### ***Regional Focus on Climate Change***

Global, national, state and local initiatives are underway or planned to examine and respond to evidence that human activity is having an impact on climate, with a resulting wide range of known and unknown consequences. COG will examine the regional dimensions of this response by integrating ongoing and new work proposed for 2007. Collateral ongoing work activities include the 2006 adopted Regional Energy Strategic Plan, MWAQC's regional air quality plan, transportation planning, the Alternative Fuels Partnership, and the green building initiative begun by the COG Board of Directors in 2006.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- COG Board of Directors action on regional climate change policy goals.
- Improved integration of existing work program activities and collaboration with other policy boards and committees, e.g. MWAQC and TPB.
- Identification of regional and local strategies in support of adopted goals.
- Best practices reports, conferences or other information-sharing tools to assist local governments in implementing local goals and strategies, including measuring progress.

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#### ***Census 2010***

COG and its member local governments have a great need for accurate and timely data published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in conjunction with the decennial census and other surveys. COG is a co-state data center for U.S. Census information and products. COG and its member local governments were very involved in preparation for Census 2000 and as a result, secured higher rates of Census participation compared with previous Census years.

#### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- COG Board of Directors action on Census 2010 goals and COG work program.
- Establishment of an ad hoc Complete Count Committee or similar panel to oversee Census 2010 efforts in the National Capital Region.

#### ***Envision Greater Washington***

COG, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Community Foundation of the National Capital Area jointly agreed in 2006 to examine the feasibility and benefits of launching a multi-year, multi-sector regional visioning campaign, following the release of a report calling for such an effort by an ad hoc organizing committee. COG has been working with these and other organizations to develop a business plan to complement and expand on the report of the organizing committee. Several of COG's ongoing and planned work program activities could be integrated with the Envision Greater Washington effort, including alternative growth scenarios that are expected to include economic development, affordable housing, and environmental impact assessments, and the update of the regional activities centers maps.

#### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- COG Board of Directors action on Envision Greater Washington policy goals and business plan.
- Identification of ongoing and expanded work program activities to support action by the COG Board of Directors and other organizations on Envision Greater Washington or to incorporate expanded work program activities into ongoing COG policy and program priorities.

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#### **Policy Focus and Priorities – Continuing in 2007**

##### ***Metro Dedicated Funding***

COG, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council jointly established a “blue ribbon panel” in late 2004 to examine the need for dedicated funding for Metro. The panel released its report in January 2005 calling for a regional approach to dedicated funding for Metro, which was subsequently endorsed by the COG Board of Directors and the TPB. Throughout 2005 and 2006, the COG Board of Directors has supported a broad range of coordination and information-sharing activities to advance Metro dedicated funding legislation at the federal and state levels.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- Continued COG outreach in support of congressional and state action on Metro dedicated funding, either as a “stand alone” action or as part of a comprehensive transportation funding package in Maryland and Virginia.

##### ***Chesapeake Bay Restoration***

The COG Board’s involvement in the cooperative program to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries goes back more than 20 years. In 1998, the Board established the Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee, reflecting the major significance of the Bay restoration program to the COG membership. COG was a strong advocate for the Chesapeake 2000 agreement signed in June 2000 by the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the governors of the Bay states, and U.S. EPA. This agreement has more than 100 commitments designed to meet water quality standards, restore and protect habitat and protect living resources in the Bay. Many of these commitments directly affect COG members’ programs in wastewater, storm water and land use; thus COG has a keen interest in the policy development for the Bay program, and to insure it is properly funded. The Board has regularly endorsed legislative and policy initiatives in the past several years reflecting the interests of COG’s membership in the Bay, and also the Potomac River Trash Treaty. The Board is also focusing on contaminants of emerging concern with a report expected in March that addresses the “intersex fish” that were observed in the Potomac in the past year and became the subject of substantial media interest.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- Advocate for funding at the federal and state levels to insure resources are available to COG’s members for upgrading wastewater treatment facilities and storm water management programs necessary for meeting Chesapeake Bay goals and targets.
- Partner with private business and industry on a healthy lawn care initiative that will include radio and print ads on how to maintain lawns in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Endorse COG member participation in the second Potomac Trash Summit expected in June, 2007, and endorse further actions to meet the Trash Treaty goal of a “trash free Potomac by 2013.”
- Adopt report on contaminants of emerging concern and “intersex fish” that will inform the region of ongoing research on this environmental health concern.

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#### ***Anacostia Restoration***

The Anacostia River is one of the most polluted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. COG's interest in restoring the Anacostia reflects the river's broader impact on the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. In June, 2006, under the leadership of then-Mayor Williams, the COG Board of Directors facilitated the creation of a new governance structure to guide the restoration of the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland. The "Anacostia Restoration Partnership" has been created and is being staffed by COG, replacing and greatly enhancing previous efforts coordinated by COG since 1987. A public-private Steering Committee has been established to coordinate restoration initiatives. A Leadership Council consisting of the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Governor of Maryland, the County Executives of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the EPA Regional Administrator and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District Engineer will meet later in 2007 to consider new policy initiatives to accelerate the pace of restoration. A central focus of the effort will be a comprehensive restoration plan for the watershed.

#### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- The COG Board will be briefed on the new Anacostia Partnership Leadership Council initiatives and may be requested to support funding initiatives for additional federal funding for restoration of the Anacostia.
- The COG Board will be briefed on the restoration of the Anacostia as it relates to restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and may be requested to endorse policy positions affecting water quality legislation or regulations impacting the Anacostia.
- New local-state-federal agreements on the restoration of the Anacostia will be presented to the COG Board. The Board Chairman will be invited to participate in signing ceremonies and other public events promoting the new agreements.

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#### ***BRAC***

In 2005 COG and TPB staff analyzed the likely impacts of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission recommendations for the Washington region. In addition to the base-specific BRAC recommendations, DoD also recommended not renewing leases for many buildings in the region that do not meet the Department's anti-terrorism standards for design and security. The findings from the COG / TPB analysis were provided to COG member local governments as well as the BRAC Commission to assist with their deliberations on the BRAC actions.

#### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- COG staff, the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC) and the region's planning directors will analyze the short- and long-term employment, population and housing impacts of the BRAC actions and update the Cooperative Forecasts (Round 7.1) and other regional databases to reflect those impacts. Staff will prepare an analysis comparing the changes shown in these updated projections to what had been previously assumed for BRAC.
- COG will work with other regional organizations such as the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the Greater Washington Board of Trade (GWBOT), and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) to host a joint conference to address impacts of the BRAC implementation.
- COG, the MDPC and the planning directors will work with NCPC and GSA to better plan for federal real estate and employment changes that may result from the more-stringent DoD security standards.

#### ***Green Building***

COG sponsored a major regional conference on green building technology in September 2006 which was attended by COG member elected officials from throughout the region. This conference set the stage for regional policy action on green building and assisted several members who adopted recently green building programs and ordinances. In November 2006, the COG Board of Directors adopted Resolution 55-06, which supports the establishment of a regional green building program and directed that a regional green building policy be prepared by the COG Intergovernmental Green Building Group for consideration by the Board of Directors in 2007. A regional green building policy would guide government construction and private building construction. Implementation of a green building policy will help support regional goals in the areas of energy conservation, air quality, storm water management, solid waste management, and the emerging issue of climate change.

#### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- Green building policy options report containing guidelines and implementation strategies.
- COG Board of Directors action on regional green building policy.
- COG will sponsor best practices forums or other information sharing tools to assist local governments in implementing goals and strategies, including measuring progress.

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#### **Strengthening COG's Capacity – New for 2007**

##### ***State and Federal Outreach***

COG is an association of more than 250 local, state and federal elected officials representing 21 local governments in the National Capital Region. Despite this diverse membership, most direct engagement is currently targeted to city and county elected and appointed officials, frequently through their participation in one or more of COG's policy boards and committees. However, action on many of COG's regional policy goals, for example Metro dedicated funding and Chesapeake Bay restoration, will require greater engagement of state and federal elected officials.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- COG Board of Directors action on proposed Intergovernmental Relations Committee, goals and work program.
- COG Board of Directors action on proposed activities and initiatives to strengthen outreach to state and federal elected officials, for example, hosting the second annual local-state partnership dinner and hosting semi-annual meetings with the area congressional delegation.

##### ***Member Outreach and Policy Board and Committee Coordination***

Newly elected officials often have little information on COG's policy goals, program priorities or governance structure and current officials may have limited knowledge if they are not active on one of COG's policy boards and committees. In addition, coordination between and among COG's policy boards and committees is incomplete and often ad hoc. It is especially important to improve communication and coordination between the COG Board of Directors and its five policy advisory committees – Metropolitan Development, Human Services, Public Safety, Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources, and Aviation, and COG's several public-private partnerships.

##### ***Anticipated Outcomes, Products or Deliverables***

- Completion and dissemination of a COG Board of Directors information guidebook and its refinement as a template to be disseminated to all COG members.
- Adoption by policy advisory committees of their annual focus and priorities that may be considered by the COG Board of Directors as it reviews and revises its focus and priorities.
- Periodic briefings for the COG Board of Directors by the policy boards and committees concerning significant policy and program activities.
- Review and adoption by the COG Board of Directors of the bylaws of its policy advisory committees to ensure conformity, as appropriate. Consideration of possible standardization of bylaws or procedures for technical committees.
- Review and revision of COG Board of Directors bylaws to approve ex officio membership status for the policy advisory committee chairman (or his vice chair/alternate), and the extent of participation by state legislators and/or gubernatorial or congressional representatives.