

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Annual Retreat

June 23-24, 2010

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay

Cambridge, Maryland

Summary Report

Background

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) held its twelfth annual retreat on July 24-25 at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge, Maryland.

COG initiated an annual, summer retreat process beginning in 1999. At the first retreat, there was an intensive facilitated process that resulted in the landmark COG Strategic Plan “New Directions, Shaping Opportunities” formally adopted by the COG Board in November 1999. The 1999 Strategic Plan has provided an excellent framework guiding the work of COG policy boards and committees, technical committees and staff. Following the 2004 retreat, the COG Board adopted its first major revision and refinement to the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is now more fully integrated into the COG fiscal year work program and budget.

Since 1999 COG has used the summer retreat as an opportunity to address specific regional policy and agency operational issues and further develop COG’s strategic direction. The retreats have also served as an important networking opportunity among COG members and senior staff.

Retreat Evaluation

At the outset, participants identified their expectations and outcomes of the weekend retreat: identification of priority issues for COG with a focus on doing fewer things better, provide staff with guidance to implement priorities, have opportunities to build and strengthen relationships and of course, have fun. COG received retreat evaluation forms from 15 participants on how well expectations were met. Most responses were positive; a summary is provided in Attachment A.

Policy Focus on Growth and Development

Beginning in 2004, the COG Board established a multi-year policy focus on growth and development. This multi-year focus was chosen as a means to achieve greater policy consensus and direction for the region. The primary focus of this year’s retreat was sharpening COG’s focus on sustainability and regional action. Sessions on implementation of *Region Forward*, green workforce development and a presentation on the State of Metropolitan America built on this theme.

The opening dinner was focused on building a 21 century workforce. Jane Oates, the Assistant Secretary for the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration discussed the Administration’s

workforce priorities and stressed the importance of regional planning and partnerships between community colleges and employers; she commented that work COG is doing through its workforce initiative is a great first step and that we should continue keep workforce and economic development a priority. Ms. Oates stated that this fall her department will announce the availability of \$500 million in grant funding for job training, planning and development in states and regions. COG would be eligible to apply for the funding on behalf of the region.

The Saturday morning session focused on sharpening COG's focus on sustainability and regional action through the implementation of Region Forward. Montgomery County Council Member Michael Knapp and Fairfax County Board Chairman Sharon Bulova provided a recap of COG's Region Forward effort and outlined implementation actions by COG already underway, and opportunities to promote this work more widely in the community and with other stakeholders. The initiative has taken us from merely envisioning the future to beginning to put those visions to work.

Participants then discussed concerns they are hearing from colleagues on their city and county councils about implementing the planning guide. Concerns included whether the jurisdictions have all the information they need to do baseline plans and measure progress; how regional goals can be applied to each locality; concerns about economic disparities and the willingness to accept change in some communities, and the need for adaptation planning to adjust to changes that weren't anticipated.

As part of this session the executive director provided a summary of COG's draft grant application in response to the HUD sustainable communities regional planning grant program including how the new regional plan for sustainability will integrate existing and new work, the planned update of the regional activity centers map, consortium governance for the grant program, and alternative approaches to meeting key outcomes without HUD grant funding.

The session resulted in a better understanding of the connection between Region Forward and the HUD grant. **It was agreed that COG will provide content on its web site to help Board members explain to residents the connection between the two.**

Saturday's mid-morning session focused on building a stronger more resilient workforce through green and emerging technologies. Ed Trumbull, project director for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative Green Consortium, discussed the work of his organization in defining green jobs, the development of a regional survey of green job demand and how the region might benefit from the results of the data analysis. While many felt that the definition used for green jobs is too general most agreed that the survey data would be useful in identifying green jobs and the proposal for a regional green job portal would be of great service to the region's job seeking population.

Alexandria Mayor Bill Euille and Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner described the status of major initiatives in their jurisdictions designed to create green jobs. **Participants suggested a more in depth future workshop on green jobs, similar to COG's careers in health forum.**

Saturday's luncheon speaker, Alan Berube, research director for the Metropolitan Research Center at Brookings, discussed the findings of the *State of Metropolitan America – On the Front Lines of*

Demographic Transformation; key demographic trends re-shaping the nation, that the scale of demographic transformation is uneven across the country and that the demographic changes require action at the national and local levels. Major metropolitan areas can be divided into “next frontier” regions (Washington, DC, Dallas and others) where population growth, diversity and educational attainment all exceed national averages; “diverse giant” regions (San Francisco, New York, and Chicago) that are growing more slowly, but have high levels of educational attainment and diversity; “new heartland” cities (including Atlanta, Charlotte and Portland, OR) that are growing rapidly, but are not very diverse, and finally, cities that are growing slowly, but have a very skilled workforce (including Baltimore and St. Louis.) After his presentation, he answered question about how immigration, the need for improved education and technology will alter the National Capital Region.

The Saturday afternoon presentation, A Private Sector Look at Regional Governance, introduced retreat participants to a few members of The 2030 Group, an group of developers and business men who have begun a study of regional leadership and governance, focused on the need for more effective regional governance structures or revenues. The University of Maryland is helping the 2030 Group by leading the study. Bob Buchanan of Buchanan Partners, LLC, praised COG’s Region Forward report, but stated that the biggest down fall is our inability to enforce the vision and authority to make localities act. Participants were skeptical of the 2030 Group’s intentions, specifically as it is unclear exactly what their goal is. **COG will continue to monitor the initiative and report back as necessary.**

Some participants said it would be very difficult to convince area residents that they should pay an additional tax to support a regional governing body. Others said they think the 2030 Group is too intent on starting its own organization instead of asking what has already been done by others. The 2030 Group will host a major meeting on Sept. 20.

With transportation funding and safety a central regional issue, retreat participants were offered a summary of the recent TPB Conversation with members of its Citizens Advisory Council, as well as the work of the WMATA Governance Review Task Force. TPB Chair Dave Snyder of Falls Church, TPB Member Muriel Bowser of the District of Columbia, and TPB Transportation Director Ron Kirby, directed the discussion.

To conclude the retreat, participants discussed the COG Strategic Plan. It was clear that Region Forward should become the framework of the strategic plan; the current plan does not require a re-write rather reorganization to better reflect the integrated themes of *Region Forward*

ATTACHMENT A: RETREAT SURVEY

15 Surveys received.

What were your expectations for the retreat?

- Info-sharing/networking/alignment of key issues
- Mostly a learning experience
- Networking, information gathering
- Discussion of 2050 implementation and other issues.
- High
- Discussion of COG goals/policies/networking; new issues to bring back to City
- Greater understanding of COG's role and networking with regional leaders
- To learn about current & coming issues for the region
- Discussion of Region Forward; transportation

Were your expectations met?

14 of the respondents said yes; 1 respond no -- expectations not fully met.

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

Building a 21st Century Workforce – Federal Leadership and Regional Partnerships

1- 0	4- 6
2- 0	5- 7
3- 1	(2 No response)

Comments:

- Very informative and motivational.
- Strong presentation by Jane Oates.
- Inspiring, but wanted more specifics.
- Speaker was terrific! Great choice – need to stay connected with her.
- Very enthusiastic, involved speaker.

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

Region Forward: Sharpening COG's Focus on Sustainability and Regional Action

1- 0	4- 6
2- 0	5- 6
3- 2	(1 No response)

Comments:

- A great explanation of "Region Forward"
- Excellent discussion with thoughtful insights
- Looking forward to more discussion of ADAPTATION
- Good discussion
- Still trying to understand how COG will spend grant funds, how specifically it ties into Region Forward, and what added value is created.

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

Green Jobs and Emerging Technologies: Building a Stronger, More Resilient Workforce

1- 0	4- 5
2- 1	5- 5
3- 4	

Comments:

- Info about how to actually create jobs would have been helpful.
- Interesting preview; look forward to results.
- Good discussion – disappointing definition of "green jobs" by Trumbull
- Interesting discussion; green jobs definition needs to be more concise.
- I don't think a discussion of creating jobs was achieved.

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

State of Metropolitan America – On the Front Lines of Demographic Transformation

1- 0	4- 2; 4.5-1
2- 1	5- 10
3- 1; 3.5-1	

Comments:

- Fascinating
- Very useful data
- Great info & publication!

- Great slides & great analysis
- Good structure, discussion facility – unclear results

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

A Private Sector Look at Regional Governance

1- 1	4- 3
2- 3	5- 0
3- 6; 3.5-1	(1 No response)

Comments:

- Hard to grasp the purpose of the 2030 Group
- Ugh, but very glad to know about it.
- Thanks for the heads up! Keep them close!
- Good to know about, but alarming attempt by development community to build more highways
- Interesting discussion but not sure it's worth pursuing.

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

Transportation Funding and WMATA Governance: Update and Regional Dialogue

1- 0	4- 7
2- 0	5- 3
3- 5	

Comments:

- A bit dry, but we must talk about it.
- This needed to bake some more before it was taken out of the oven!
- Good discussion, unclear on results of discussion.
- Good to hear update – but issues too complex to cover in short period of time. Many issues were not discussed.
- This is the kind of discussion the COG retreat is designed for!

Retreat activities: 1 being poor; 5 being excellent.

Location and Facilities: 4- 3; 5-11; 1-No response.

Overall Retreat Rating: 4- 6; 5-8; 1-No response.

Overall Retreat comments:

- COG rocks! I miss Stuart!
- Well worth giving up a weekend for. Wish more people could have participated and/or stayed.
- Thanks for an excellent retreat!

- Would be helpful to have a better balance between providing info and discussion. I would find it more helpful to receive presentations about what is affecting our region.
- Additional opportunities for joint discussion of Board and COG leadership during the year.