

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Broadband Access Task Force**

**Briefing to the COG Board
September 13, 2006**

In response to Resolution R1-06, COG has been involved since January in developing recommendations for the Board regarding the deployment of broadband technologies by local governments. The impetus behind this effort is clear: broadband is driving today's economy, and as a region we need to ensure that our businesses, our citizens and our governments do not fall behind.

The Broadband Access Task Force (BATF), chaired by Loudoun County Supervisor Lori Waters, began by gathering together a group of individuals who could address the key issues. The BATF work plan, including the list of members, was created to give the effort some structure. The work plan is attached to this briefing and outlines the Task Force's primary goals, deliverables and a timeline of activities.

After the work plan was developed, a series of meetings and conference calls involving the full group or subsets occurred over the period of February to August. These meetings were held to discuss issues and begin to develop a framework for understanding the relationship between government and broadband technologies. In addition, a college intern was brought on board to conduct research on broadband availability and adoption both in this region and in the country as a whole. Research was also conducted on policy issues raised by broadband, such as Net Neutrality, Internet Taxation and Universal Service.

A report outline, attached to this briefing, was completed in July. The finished report will contain: an overview of how broadband technologies can help jurisdictions meet their goals; how broadband is being used in the region and around the country today; policy and technical recommendations for local governments who want to deploy broadband networks; and key legislative and technical issues to consider. The report will be a blueprint for local governments to use when developing local broadband initiatives and policies.

Recognizing that it needed to understand how local jurisdictions use broadband now, the BATF created a survey of broadband attitudes and projects to be completed by COG members. The survey instrument is attached to this briefing. COG staff briefed the Chief Administrative Officer's committee on July 5 to alert them to the survey, which was distributed by the COG Executive Director to the CAOs later that month. To date, five jurisdictions have completed and returned the survey.

The BATF has also been working on a regional Broadband Forum, to be held in late October. The tentative date is October 26th, and the forum will likely be held at COG.

The event will highlight the work of the BATF and present a draft copy of its report. It will also provide a space for government and the private sector to engage in constructive dialogue around key issues. An agenda for the forum will be available shortly.