



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – September 2023
DATE: September 6, 2023

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – At the June board meeting, the TPB received an overview on intercity bus and rail trends in advance of an October 2023 in-depth intercity travel forum and an update on Military Installation Resilience Reviews conducted for Fort Belvoir, Joint Base Myer Henderson Hall, and Quantico. The TPB adopted a resolution to amend the FY 2023 - 2026 Transportation Improvement Program to increase funding for the Alexandria 4th Track project and add \$25.5 million for the Long Bridge Virginia-DC project as part of the Northern Virginia Core Capacity project. At the July TPB meeting, the board approved \$3.2 million for six Maryland Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside projects and received updates on the National Capital Region Freight Plan and the launch of the Enhanced Mobility grant selection process.

Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) – At the July meeting, CBPC members were briefed on the Resilient Fairfax Plan and members discussed the protection of communities and government assets, such as historical buildings, from urban flooding in areas not designated as flood plains, and the need for requirements to disclose flood history in advance of property sales. Members were also briefed about PFAS and the Lead and Copper rule, and about the Chesapeake Bay Program's "Beyond 2025" Steering Committee.

Climate, Energy & Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – At the July CEEPC meeting, the launch of the EV Clearinghouse was announced, including a newly published Local Government EV-Ready Checklist as well as the launch of the Regional EV Infrastructure Implementation (REVII) Strategy. The meeting featured a session called "Ask the Expert: Building Electrification" with national experts from the Building Electrification Institute, New Buildings Institute, and Rocky Mountain Institute.



Podcast: The region then and now

Penny Gross joined the COG Board in 1996 after she was elected to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Since then, she's been a central figure at COG as regional leaders have worked together to tackle issues such as the health of the Chesapeake Bay and local waterways, public safety, Metro, and more.

[Listen to the conversation with Penny Gross](#)

Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Policy Committee – In early August, the City of College Park hosted FARM, which met jointly with the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, based in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. The meeting included discussions on justice and equity for Black farmers and historically disinvested communities in the region, needed investments to scale and sustain regional food production, as well as the Food and Water Resilience Project and the Maryland Food Bank.

Human Services Policy Committee (HSPC) – At the July HSPC meeting, the committee received an overview of the workforce strategies being used in Fairfax County including career exploration, mentoring programs, and job readiness/placement opportunities, as well as an overview of common and pervasive workforce challenges.

Region Forward Coalition (RFC) – At the July RFC meeting, members received an overview of United Way’s ALICE Lives Here initiative, which aims to reduce health, education, and economic disparities and improve outcomes for individuals and families in the region. Members were also briefed by SAMU First Response, who outlined the support they have been giving to migrants, and the Urban Institute and DC Hunger Solutions discussed food insecurity and SNAP challenges and opportunities.



COG and Board of Trade officials meet to discuss regional priorities.

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Stakeholder engagement – Clark Mercer spoke on a Loudoun Chamber of Commerce panel on June 20 on affordable housing. COG Board leadership met with officials from the Board of Trade on June 23 to discuss Metro and other regional priorities. On July 13, Mercer participated with area leaders in the Reimagine Downtown DC Summit organized by DowntownDC BID, Golden Triangle BID, and Federal City Council.

Commuter Connections – COG Transportation Operations Program Director Nicholas Ramfos was inducted into the Association for Commuter Transportation Hall of Fame at the 37th Annual International Conference in Seattle. In the past 27 years that Ramfos has been working at COG, he has led our Commuter Connections program, managed and overseen various multi-million-dollar transportation programs to serve people with special needs and create innovative tools to improve people’s commutes, and helped facilitate the start-up of the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission.



Nicholas Ramfos (pictured left) receives the Hall of Fame Award at the Association for Commuter Transportation.

Car Free Day – Join us on September 22 to celebrate World Car Free Day. This annual event organized by COG’s Commuter Connections program encourages residents, commuters, and students to choose a greener way to travel by going car free or car lite on Friday, September 22. By taking the free online pledge at carfreemetrodcc.org, participants contribute to reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, improve their health, and qualify for great prizes.

Fair Housing – On August 30-31, COG Housing Program Manager Hilary Chapman presented at the 2023 Fair Housing Leadership Conference to discuss the development of the Regional Fair Housing Plan.



COG Housing Program Manger Hilary Chapman (pictured right) at the Fair Housing Leadership Conference.

Ozone Awareness Month – Clean Air Partners, coordinated by COG, launched their Ozone Action Month campaign in August to encourage Baltimore-Washington commuters to green their commuting routines to reduce emissions and harmful ground-level ozone. The campaign promoted simple transportation related tips such as taking transit, biking, and carpooling. The campaign also featured education exhibits including a car encased inside a clear bubble to demonstrate emissions with puffs of vapor “exhaust” and show how driving habits contribute to poor air quality.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Economy – COG’s Chief Administrative Officers Committee sent a letter to the Office of Management and Budget noting the benefits of increased in-person work for federal employees. The letter drew coverage from various outlets, including the Washington Post, Washington Business Journal, WTOP, WAMU, Washington Times, and Politico.

[Washington Post](#) – quotes COG’s Clark Mercer

[Washington Business Journal](#) – quotes Clark Mercer

Metro – COG’s retreat and statement committing to focus on Metro’s financial sustainability drew coverage from the Washington Post, Axios, and WAMU.

[Washington Post](#) – quotes Clark Mercer



Outreach teams educated truck and bus drivers about the financial and environmental benefits of redcing idling in their vehicles for the COG Turn Your Engine Off campaign. The teams visited 14 locations across the region and spoke with more than 500 bus and truck drivers.

Air Quality – COG’s Turn Your Engine Off campaign drew coverage on WTOP, Washington Informer, Prince George’s Community Television News, and MyMCMedia.

[WTOP – quotes COG’s Jen Desimone](#)

Water Supply – Coordination related to drought and water supply, including COG’s regional drought plan, have been referenced in several recent stories, including the Washington Post and WAMU.

[Washington Post – quotes COG’s Steve Bieber](#)

Transportation Alternatives Set- Aside – The TPB’s approval of approximately \$3.2 million in federal funding for six non-highway transportation projects in suburban Maryland drew coverage from several local outlets covering Maryland, such as the Frederick News Post, MyMCMedia, and DC News Now.

[DC News Now – quotes COG’s John Swanson](#)

Food Security – The FARM committee drew coverage related to regional coordination efforts on addressing food insecurity.

[Washington Business Journal – quotes COG FARM Chair and City of Fairfax Councilmember Jon Stehle](#)