



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – November 2023
DATE: November 1, 2023

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – At its October meeting, the board approved \$250,000 in funding for three Transit Within Reach projects that will improve sidewalk, shared-use path, street crossing, and bike lane access to transit stations. The board also received a briefing regarding the federally mandated Carbon Reduction Strategies from the departments of transportation in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

FARM Policy Committee – At its October meeting, FARM received a briefing from the Capital Area Food Bank on their *2023 Hunger Report*, which found that while the economy has rebounded, food insecurity levels have remained static. Montgomery County presented their strategic plan to end childhood hunger and outlined their 14 strategies to address this crisis in the County. Members of Hunger Solutions in the metropolitan Washington area also provided an overview of the initiatives that advocates and elected leaders are undertaking to enhance school meal access, boost childhood nutrition, and improve food security for other residents such as seniors.

Region Forward Coalition – At its October meeting, coalition members received an overview of WMATA's plan to leverage their real estate portfolio to deliver renewable energy to local communities through an innovative and community-oriented solar carport project. Members were then briefed on the goals and strategies of Loudoun County's recently approved energy strategy. Finally, members were briefed on the Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition's strategies and initiatives to advance the Community Energy Environmental Justice Initiative in transportation regionally and nationally.



Congressional Delegation Reception

On October 25, COG hosted a reception that brought together local officials, including members of COG board and policy committees, alongside the region's four U.S. Senators – Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen representing Maryland, and Tim Kaine and Mark Warner representing Virginia. The event emphasized key priorities such as enhancing transportation infrastructure, restoring the Chesapeake Bay, advancing climate goals, and ensuring WMATA's financial sustainability.

[Read the news highlight](#)

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

RiverRenew tour –The Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee took a tour of the Alexandria RiverRenew tunnel project. The CBPC group met with Justin Carl, AlexRenew’s General Manager, and a team of staff who gave them a tour of the River Renew project and a tour of the plant’s biological nutrient removal system. When completed in 2025, the tunnel will capture and clean the combined sewer overflows of Old Town Alexandria.



COG officials join AlexRenew on tour of tunnel project.

Intercity travel work session – On October 18, the TPB held an Intercity Rail and Bus Travel Work Session prior to its October meeting. Representatives from Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, Maryland Transit Administration/MARC, Amtrak, American Bus Association, and Union Station Redevelopment Corporation updated the TPB on ridership trends, service and facility upgrades, and partnerships between jurisdictions.



COG Executive Director Clark Mercer took part in the *Capital Area Economic Forum* hosted by the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance and George Mason University.

Housing – COG provided an opportunity for the public to review and comment on a draft grant application to HUD for Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) funding from October 9 through October 31. COG also held a public hearing on the draft application, courtesy of the District of Columbia’s public input platform, on the evening of Monday, October 23. The application will be submitted to HUD by November 6. COG’s grant proposal is focused on three goals from the regional fair housing plan: increasing the amount and geographic distribution of affordable housing; reform of zoning and land use (to increase the amount and geographic distribution of affordable housing) and preservation and anti-displacement.

Commuter Connections fall campaign – On October 24, COG’s Commuter Connections started a fall campaign, renewing its commitment to improving air quality, traffic, and daily commute times and promoting its wide array of programs includes Guaranteed Ride Home, the Pool Rewards program, the Flextime Rewards program, and the CarpoolNow app.

COG Institute for Regional Excellence – On October 20, COG held a graduation ceremony for Cohort 19 of the Regional Excellence Regional Executive Development Program. Falls Church City Manager Wyatt Shields was the keynote speaker. The cohort comprised of 25 public sector managers from Prince William County, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Alexandria, D.C., Bowie, Gaithersburg, Laurel, Arlington County, the Northern Virginia EMS Council, WMATA, and COG.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Metro – COG’s focus on helping find a long-term, sustainable funding solution for Metro was highlighted in stories by the Washington Post and WAMU.

[Washington Post](#) – quotes COG Board Chair Kate Stewart

Housing – COG’s Housing Affordability Planning Program was featured in a story by WTOP.

[WTOP](#) – COG Housing Affordability Planning Program

Crime – COG’s *Report on Crime and Crime Control* Report garnered media coverage from the Washington Examiner, ARLnow, and Univision.

[Washington Examiner](#) – quotes COG Police Chiefs Committee Chair Chief Russell E. Hamill

Transit Within Reach – FFXnow covered the Prosperity Avenue Safety Project which was awarded \$80,000 from the TPB Transit Within Reach Program.

[FFXnow](#) – quotes COG Principal Transportation Planner John Swanson



COG’s Street Smart safety campaign returned to remind drivers how to safely share the roads with bicyclists and pedestrians this fall and drew coverage from several local outlets, such as 7 News, Fox 5, and ALXnow.

[7 News](#) – Street Smart campaign



In the latest episode of COG’s podcast, *Think Regionally*, host Robert McCartney talks with public safety leaders about recent crime trends and how area law enforcement agencies are working together through COG and other initiatives to keep communities safe.

[Listen to the episode/read the transcript](#)