



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – May 2023
DATE: May 10, 2023

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – At its April meeting, the TPB approved several items: the Regional Bike to Work Day 2023 Proclamation, an updated *Visualize 2050* long-range transportation plan development schedule, and funding for FY 2024 Transportation Land-Use Connections Program projects. In addition, the TPB amended the *FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* to align funding with WMATA's budget and capital improvement program and received an overview of the draft *2023 Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan*, which is open for public comment. Prior to the board meeting, the TPB hosted a Metro Better Bus work session in coordination with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and WMATA.

Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Policy Committee – At its April meeting, FARM members approved a two-year strategic plan. FARM also heard from speakers about how a proposed rule change from the U.S. Department of Agriculture would allow more schools to qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Schools that qualify for CEP offer free meals to all students, regardless of income.

Region Forward Coalition (RFC) – At its April meeting, coalition members received a briefing from Connected DMV on how the organization is working to ensure that growth within the region remains inclusive and equitable. The Coalition also received an overview of Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan and heard from the Fairfax Alliance for Better Biking on its goals and work to make bicycling safe, accessible, and commonplace in Fairfax County.



Officials join together to promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety

On April 13, several COG Board Members from Montgomery County, including Councilmember Kate Stewart (COG Board Chair), Council President Evan Glass, and County Executive Marc Elrich participated in a press event to launch the Spring 2023 COG Street Smart Campaign in Wheaton. Participants called attention to a 37 percent increase in pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in 2022 compared to the prior year and urged everyone to take action to reverse this distressing trend.

[Learn more about the safety campaign and its launch event](#)

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Earth Day – Clean Air Partners celebrated Earth Day and Air Quality Awareness Week by launching a campaign about simple swaps residents can make in their backyards to reduce pollution and protect their health. The lawn and garden campaign featured a giveaway of over 100 electric lawn tools and propane grills. Special pop-up exhibits were held at participating Ace Hardware stores in the region.

Public Safety Communications – On April 25, COG’s Department of Homeland Security and Public Safety (DHSPS) hosted and facilitated a meeting between senior Motorola representatives and public safety stakeholders representing law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, 911 centers, and public safety communications to discuss the services and capabilities Motorola is providing to agencies across the region.

Infrastructure Protection Course – On April 4 and 5, DHSPS hosted a training with the Texas A&M Engineering Extension for participants from area jurisdictions across disciplines. The training instructed participants on threats and vulnerabilities to determine risk. Participants also had the opportunity to practice on-site vulnerability assessments of local facilities, such as a D.C. Fire and EMS station.

Fair Housing – In April, COG Housing Program Manager Hilary Chapman presented the draft *Regional Fair Housing Plan* to the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Housing Commission, the City of Bowie’s Fair Housing Month event, and the NAACP Arlington County’s Fair Housing Conference.

Drug Take Back Day – COG and the region’s water utilities’ Community Engagement Campaign promoted the DEA’s annual National Drug Take Back Day on April 22 through a series of advertisements and other promotional materials on social media.

Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) – On April 20, COG transportation staff hosted a webinar titled “Promoting Vibrant Communities and Safer Roads”, celebrating over 15 years of the TLC Program, which provides consultant assistance to area projects that promote walkable, bikeable, and mixed-use communities. The webinar was a fast-paced, “pecha kucha” style session and featured guest speakers from local transportation and planning agencies.



Battery management campaign launches

On April 7, COG Board Chair Kate Stewart joined regional fire and solid waste officials to launch COG’s Go Recycle battery management education campaign. The press event included a demonstration from Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services showing the substantial fire risk of putting batteries, particularly lithium-ion, in household trash.

[Watch the fire demonstration and learn battery management tips](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Street Smart – COG’s Spring 2023 Street Smart campaign has drawn coverage on WTOP, NBC4, FOX 5, ABC7, WUSA9, and more.

[WTOP](#) – quotes COG Board Member Marc Elrich

[FOX 5](#) – quotes COG Board Chair Kate Stewart

Battery Management – COG’s Go Recycle campaign press event was featured in stories by NBC4, FOX 5, and WTOP, and discussed during COG Board Chair Stewart’s appearance on WAMU’s The Politics Hour.

[NBC4](#) – quotes Stewart

[WTOP](#) – quotes Stewart

Cooperative Forecasting – COG Board briefing on regional forecasts through 2050 sheds light on growth trends.

[WTOP](#) – quotes Stewart and COG Director of Community Planning and Services Paul DesJardin

[ARLnow](#) – quotes DesJardin

Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) – Recent board briefing on the City of Frederick’s use of EEAs to plan parks and recreational facilities.

[Frederick News-Post](#) – quotes COG’s Planning, Data, and Research Director Tim Canan



Podcast: Planning for the future

In the latest episode of COG's podcast, *Think Regionally*, Clark Mercer joins host Robert McCartney to discuss the roles he sees COG playing as area leaders tackle some big issues on the horizon, including Metro funding, housing, equity, and the region’s post-COVID economy.

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