



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – September 2024
DATE: September 4, 2024

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – In June, the TPB approved an amended Air Quality Conformity analysis scope of work and project inputs for *Visualize 2050*, the National Capital Region Transportation Plan, which is the next step in the planning process. The board voted to conduct two alternative scenarios in the analysis—one with the I-495 Southside Express Lanes project and one without the project. The TPB also approved the region's first comprehensive Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan (TRIP). In July, the TPB approved funding for a total of 12 projects that support walkability and safety under two programs: the Maryland Carbon Reduction Program and Transportation Alternatives Program.

Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee – At its July meeting, the committee discussed the Chesapeake Bay Program's Beyond 2025 Steering Committee recommendation that the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement be amended and the structure of the partnership be streamlined and simplified. Members provided feedback on the recommendation and the draft report.

Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee – At its July meeting, ICF provided an overview of the approach, schedule, and deliverables for the region's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP). Members also received a briefing from experts on climate impacts, the cost of inaction, and ways to close the investment gap for resilience and climate adaptation. The committee also received a



Potomac Conference on Public Safety

On July 9, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) joined the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Greater Washington Partnership, and the Consortium of Universities of the Metropolitan Washington Area at Catholic University to reconvene the Potomac Conference for the first time in over a decade—providing a forum for a diverse group of area leaders to collaborate on major regional topics. This year's conference focused on partnering on public safety initiatives and counteracting the impact of crime on the region's residents and businesses.

[Learn more](#)

presentation on the TPB's transportation resilience planning efforts.

Food & Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Policy Committee – At its August meeting, speakers from FRESHFARM and The Capital Market discussed ways local governments can support farmers markets. Capital Area Food Bank's (CAFB) CEO presented on the organization's work in FY24 and new Lorton, VA facility. Several viewpoints were shared from COG member jurisdictions which echoed the sustained, high level of need for emergency food assistance.

Human Services Policy Committee – At its July meeting, nationally-recognized leaders from the Housing Narrative Lab and Community Solutions provided members with effective communications and messaging strategies to use in their communities regarding solutions to preventing and ending homelessness. The discussion focused on how local governments can respond in the immediate aftermath of the Supreme Court decision, *The City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*, which ruled the city is not prohibited from enforcing criminal punishments against people experiencing homelessness for camping outside. The timely content provided members with a forum to discuss local challenges and solutions.

Region Forward Coalition – At its July meeting on livability, RFC members were briefed by the Greater Washington Community Foundation about the regional findings from the Voices DMV Survey as well as Livability 22202, a community organization in Arlington County. In addition, Arlington County's Communications Office led a workshop on how local governments respond to and define livability at the local level, providing participants with strategies for effective communication.

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Transportation planning – On August 2, the TPB hosted a Regional Curbside Management Forum featuring presentations, a panel, and open discussion about trends and evolving practices for addressing the high level of demand for curb space by personal vehicles, ride hail companies, transit, cyclists, and freight delivery companies.

Air Quality – Clean Air Partners held a gas lawn tool exchange initiative, which encouraged residents to replace their gas powered lawn tools (lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and grass trimmers) with more eco-friendly electric versions. As part of the campaign, a series of events at Baltimore-Washington area Ace hardware stores were held to educate people on how to fight hidden backyard pollution hazards. During August's Ozone Action Month, Clean Air Partners encouraged Baltimore-Washington commuters to protect their communities by making small changes in their transportation usage. Two events were held in the region, Arlington and Charles Counties, that included exhibits to show how driving habits contribute to poor air quality.



Car Free Day

COG's Commuter Connections program hosts Car Free Day in the Washington, DC region to bring awareness to the benefits of travel options such as transit, bicycling and walking, and also telework for people who can work from home.

[Take the pledge/spread the word](#)

Housing – On June 26, COG received a PRO Housing grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), totaling over \$3.5 million, to improve access to affordable housing in metropolitan Washington. COG applied for funding through the program on behalf of nine local jurisdictions: The District of Columbia; and in Virginia, the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Prince William County; and in Maryland, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, and the City of Gaithersburg.



Public Safety – This summer, the COG Metrotech Subcommittee leveraged Urban Area Security Initiative grant funding to host a series of advanced training sessions designed to equip bomb squad technicians with hands-on skills in a collaborative regional environment. The sessions focused on proficiency in responding to diverse threats using real-world scenarios. In August, on behalf of regional stakeholders, COG hosted the Securing the Cities Semiannual National Stakeholder Meeting to provide a forum to discuss national program updates and share best practices related to its preventative radiological nuclear detection mission.

COG’s Transportation Operations Programs Director Daniel Sheehan attended APTA’s Sustainability and Operations conference on August 20 to present about the Ride for the Region transit challenge, which uses gamification to incentivize transit ridership.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Drought watch – On July 29, COG declared a regional Drought Watch, receiving coverage from 20+ media outlets, including the Washington Post, FOX 5, WTOP, WUSA 9, and DC News Now.

[DC News Now – quotes COG Water Resources Director Steve Bieber](#)

[WTOP – quotes COG Principal Water Resources Planner Lisa Ragain](#)

Air Quality – This summer, COG’s forecasts of unhealthy air days have received coverage from MoCo360, WTOP, NBC 4, WUSA 9, MyMCM, Inside NoVa, 7 News, ARLnow, and ALXnow. In addition, COG’s Clean Air Partners received coverage from FOX 5 and WUSA 9 about Ozone Action Month.

[WUSA9 - story on region’s air quality trends, references COG data](#)

Housing Press Conference – Event on COG PRO Housing grant covered by ALXnow, Reuters, and Alexandria Gazette Packet.

[ALXnow](#)



A recent Washington Post editorial focused on DMVMoves, the COG/WMATA joint initiative to create a unified vision and sustainable funding model for the region’s transit network.

Potomac Conference – Event received coverage from WTOP and Washington Business Journal.

[WTOP](#)

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program – The TPB Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program awardees in Maryland received coverage from the Frederick News-Post, PGCTV, and WFMD.

[The Frederick News-Post](#)