

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL *of* GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors Policy Focus & Priorities: 2010

COG Board of Directors Leadership

Chairman Kwame Brown, Council of the District of Columbia

Vice Chairman Andrea Harrison, Prince George's County Council

Vice Chairman Frank Principi, Prince William Board of County Supervisors

Background

COG's Vision: The members of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) envision the National Capital Region as the best place to live, work, play and learn.

COG's Mission: COG fosters regionalism – by promoting regional partnerships, developing best practices, applying cutting-edge technologies, and providing a forum for discussion and decision-making. The COG Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing COG's mission and implementing its work program and activities.

The most challenging issues facing the metropolitan Washington region require a long-term vision and commitment to action. As a voluntary association of local governments, COG educates area policy officials as to the regional challenges and identifies and encourages the implementation of solutions built around consensus. While COG has an impressive record of achievement using this approach, solutions are not often easily reached and rarely can be completed in the one-year term of office for its policy boards and committees.

Beginning in 2004, the COG Board of Directors committed to a sustained focus on growth and development. The foundation for this policy focus is COG's adopted Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies centered on growth issues. This focus does not preclude COG's leadership and involvement on a wide-range of policies and programs; rather, it is intended to help provide a framework for potentially disconnected actions and better organize COG's ongoing and new work. This focus also complements and leverages the priorities and activities of COG's two independent policy boards, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

Beginning in 2009, COG also began to focus on a number of economic issues, centered on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected

challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act is an extraordinary response to a crisis unlike any since the Great Depression.

COG ARRA activities in 2009 included: assisting area governments in identifying ARRA information, deadlines and funding opportunities; convening government officials and other stakeholders to identify and share best practices for ARRA investments and programs; and identifying and seeking opportunities to leverage ARRA funding for regional and/or COG-led projects.

Building on its ARRA efforts and beginning in 2010, **COG will refocus and intensify its work on economic development, economic recovery and jobs.** While the National Capital Region is an acknowledged economic and jobs leader nationally and globally, the economic recession and the difficult fiscal environment facing area local and state governments, businesses and residents calls for greater COG attention and action in 2010 and the coming years.

New Activities in 2010

1. Regional Jobs and Economic Resiliency

While the National Capital Region has fared better than many regions in the current economic recession, unemployment remains unacceptably high and some communities and residents have been disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn. The National Capital Region has not been as effective as it could be in leveraging the strong federal economic presence or directing federal stimulus funds to focus more clearly on job creation. The COG Board seeks to make jobs and economic resiliency a much stronger focus in 2010.

In 2009, COG launched *Building the Region Together*, along with the National Capital Planning Commission to foster greater federal and regional partnership. This effort seeks to ensure effective coordination across federal agencies and local jurisdictions in the National Capital Region and leverage the special federal relationships here. COG and NCPC anticipate launching several initiatives in 2010 and will hold twice a year meetings of federal and local officials to monitor progress and ensure outcomes.

Action: COG will review the President's FY 2011 budget and proposed federal economic stimulus legislation to identify local and/or regional opportunities to advance job creation and retention efforts in the National Capital Region. The COG Board will receive this information in March 2010.

Action: COG will leverage its existing and expanded partnerships with the federal government to secure support from key agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Personnel Management to ensure that federal job and economic initiatives include a regional component. The COG Board Chairman and other members will meet with key Cabinet and Agency officials to secure federal partnership and support.

Action: COG will seek federal and local support for a new pilot program modeled on its Transportation Land Use Connection program. The proposed Federal-Local Connections program is envisioned to provide small grants to local governments with a cooperating federal partner that enhance sustainability and economic development in or adjacent to federal facilities. COG will also work with NCPC and other stakeholders to prepare a high-level regional business plan. This plan will focus on fully utilizing the region's key assets to better achieve accessibility, sustainability, prosperity and livability objectives using the framework of COG's Region Forward compact.

Action: COG will work with area business organizations, technology firms and other organizations to identify how the National Capital Region can integrate information on job openings created as a result of federal stimulus legislation and aid job seekers in successfully competing for these positions.

2. Regional Workforce Competitiveness

COG established a new Workforce Competitiveness Task Force in 2009. In January 2010 the COG Board approved the Task Force's report, *Closing the Gaps to Build the Future*. The report concluded that the National Capital Region is at a critical point in its economy that requires a change in course toward a more sustainable, productive and competitive workforce. The report recommended that COG aid in forging a more integrated workforce, building on existing and proposed strategies in economic development, education and training, and workforce readiness. The report and its recommendations can serve as a catalyst for new or renewed efforts by COG in support of more effective workforce and jobs strategies.

Action: The COG Board will sponsor a regional forum in early 2010 to convene regional workforce, education and training stakeholders to secure support for the report's three principle strategies: 1) youth education and career preparation; 2) adult career development and redevelopment; and 3) integrating workforce development with economic development. COG will champion and partner with regional organizations, the business community, and local, state and federal government agencies to identify and implement new initiatives that respond to these three strategies.

3. Economic Sustainability and Recovery

In addition to COG's work in support of ARRA activities in the National Capital Region, in 2009 the COG Board has received monthly summary reports and periodically been advised of significant local and regional actions, such as COG's application for federal TIGER stimulus funds for high-priority transportation projects in the National Capital Region. The federal Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) provided new funding to financial institutions and the private sector to stabilize the economy and stimulate lending to small businesses and homeowners. In 2010, the Obama Administration and Congress are expected to consider additional job and stimulus legislation, including tax credits for job creation, extension of unemployment benefits and other measures to create or retain jobs.

Action: COG will analyze 2009 federal ARRA and TARP spending to examine its impact on the National Capital Region. Much of the TARP spending has gone to corporate banks, while small businesses are struggling to secure loans as lending standards at community banks have tightened. COG will partner with area research and business organizations and universities to conduct this research and identify opportunities to leverage the President's small business lending fund, a proposal aimed at helping small businesses grow and create jobs. COG anticipates findings will lead to recommendations on how remaining ARRA and/or TARP funds can be prioritized to maximize jobs and economic impact in the National Capital Region.

Action: COG will examine its ongoing policy and program activities to identify opportunities to strengthen or elevate economic sustainability and recovery. For example, work underway by the Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee could examine not just the number of homes benefiting from weatherization programs, but the economic benefit from jobs created or retained with area small businesses.

Continuing in 2010

1. Greater Washington 2050

The COG Board approved *Region Forward – A Comprehensive Guide for Regional Planning and Measuring Progress in the 21st Century* in January 2010. This is the first step in a series of actions to refocus, redirect and integrate COG's planning work program.

Action: COG will secure member government, state and federal government, and business, civic and community

endorsement of the *Region Forward* voluntary compact.

Action: COG will realign the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee to oversee *Region Forward* implementation.

Action: COG will complete the *Region Forward* baseline report in 2010.

Action: COG will begin Round 8 update of cooperative forecasts and regional activity centers maps; and seek HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative funding to support key elements of *Region Forward* implementation.

2. Climate Change

In November 2008, the COG Board adopted the *National Capital Region Climate Change Report*, which set regional targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for 2012, 2020, and 2050. It also included a wide range of recommendations to reducing emissions and conserve energy, address financing, outreach and education, and specific action by COG member local governments.

In 2009 the Board created the Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) to implement the report and to develop a detailed action plan with specific performance measures and deadlines. In January 2010, the CEEPC adopted its “2010-2012 Regional Climate and Energy Action Work Plan” which contains a series of regional and local government actions and deadlines intended to meet the 2012 regional greenhouse gas reduction target. Actions are organized in five major categories: Planning, Energy (including energy efficiency and renewable energy), Transportation and Land Use, Adapting to Climate Change, and Outreach and Education. The action plan includes several initiatives that directly support local and regional economic development and job creation, especially in the green building, alternative fueled vehicles, energy conservation and renewable energy elements of the plan.

Action: The COG Board will be briefed on the CEEPC Action Plan in early 2010; the Board will provide guidance and direction on implementation priorities with a special focus on those elements that support the region’s economic development. These elements include energy conservation retrofits of single and multi-family residences and commercial buildings; installation of renewable energy systems; consideration of green purchasing policies; purchase of alternative fueled vehicles; and identification of financing mechanisms as well as grant opportunities to support implementation of the plan’s recommendations.

3. Housing

The National Capital Region, like many parts of the country, is facing a foreclosure crisis that is eroding years of progress in community revitalization and wealth creation. Thousands of families have lost their homes jeopardizing their safety, security and financial stability. Foreclosures not only pose issues for the families that are losing their homes but threaten the stability of the communities surrounding them. An aggressive regional foreclosure collaborative is necessary to prevent thousands more families from being pushed into foreclosure, which will have an impact on these families, their community and the region long after the mortgage foreclosure crisis.

As the numbers of families losing their homes continues to rise, housing counselors are overwhelmed trying to work out solutions with servicers. Other social service providers are experiencing an uptick in need from struggling homeowners and those who have recently been forced to relocate. There have been efforts across the region to increase capacity through trainings and education; but there is more to be done on a region wide level.

Action: COG will partner with the Urban Institute, Fannie Mae and the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington to establish the Capital Area Foreclosure Network (CAFN). The Network will review the successfulness of loan modification programs in keeping the region’s residents in their homes. It will also raise awareness of the role

of housing counselors and free legal assistance in assisting homeowners in foreclosure. CAFN is an innovative partnership between three distinct and related groups already working on mitigating the effects of the foreclosure crisis. Network activities will complement local programs or engage in advocacy and/or marketing campaigns that are more effective at the regional level. CAFN will officially launch in March 2010 with a coordinated set of activities and coincide with the release of a report that will measure the capacity of housing counseling agencies across the region.

4. Chesapeake Bay Restoration

The COG Board has long-standing policy supporting the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. This includes establishment of its Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) in 1998 to create a special focus on the Bay and restoration policy. This led to adoption of policy principles to guide the Board's policy engagement with federal and state agencies, and numerous specific policy actions over the past 12 years emanating from the Board's basic principles. The Board revised its policy principles in April, 2009, to reflect the increasingly regulatory nature of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

The current policy framework includes support for programs and policies that reflect a holistic, multi-sector analysis of environmental benefits and costs, as well as technical feasibility; that equity and cost-effectiveness shall guide allocation of responsibility for Bay restoration; that sound science must underlie all programs and policies to restore the Bay; and that policies and programs to restore the Bay must be developed through a collaborative stakeholder process that specifically includes local governments.

President Obama issued an Executive Order in October 2009 which establishes the federal regulatory framework for meeting water quality standards and restoration goals for the Bay. Additional regulatory actions are being implemented by the U.S. EPA and the states to address and set limits on pollution discharges from wastewater, stormwater, agriculture and air deposition to the Bay. The CBPC is deeply engaged along with COG staff in actively tracking and engaging the Bay program as these pollution limits are being considered to advocate for standards and goals that are consistent with COG's policy principles. COG's local governments have invested billions of dollars since the mid-1980s in wastewater treatment plant upgrades that has led to a revitalized Potomac River and significantly toward Bay restoration. However, there is recognition that stormwater pollution remains a major challenge that requires an additional level of effort to help meet Bay restoration targets and goals. The urbanized portion of the COG region is likely to face complex and costly requirements to control stormwater in areas that previously did not have such requirements.

Action: COG will focus on stormwater management requirements, costs and benefits, and the proposed regulations limiting overall pollution to the Bay. The COG Board will consider legislation introduced by Senator Ben Cardin in 2009 that would provide significant funding to assist local governments with meeting the stormwater retrofit requirements, while also formalizing the President's executive order. The Board will also be briefed and is expected to consider a range of policy positions relative to EPA and state proposals for setting pollution loading limits and the associated enforcement requirements. The COG Board will work closely with its members to develop policies and approaches that support meeting the goals of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort while balancing the competing financial pressures being felt across the region.

Highlighted Policy, Program, and Administrative Issues

1. The **Anacostia restoration program** will continue to advocate on behalf of federal funding through the Water Resources Development Act for its partnership activities. Obtaining federal funding is seen as critical for meeting Anacostia and Chesapeake restoration goals. The effort in 2010 will focus on implementation of the “Action Agenda” adopted in 2008, as well as completion of the Corps of Engineers Anacostia Restoration Plan that is a central focus of the Anacostia Partnership.
2. COG’s **aviation program** was revamped in 2009 to focus on targeted aviation and related economic issues. COG’s first regional aviation forum in January 2010 addressed the economic assets and impact of aviation facilities and activities in the National Capital Region. Additional forums planned for 2010 will examine additional economic, transportation and environmental/noise issues associated with area aviation facilities.
3. COG will continue to strengthen its **outreach to state elected officials** in 2010, developing targeted communication tools and strengthening ties and collaboration with existing state-focused public interest organizations. COG will also launch regular **outreach with the region’s congressional delegation** in 2010 to foster improved regional-federal coordination and advocacy in support of COG’s strengthened focus on leveraging federal relationships and economic development, economic recovery and jobs.
4. The COG Board will appoint a Task Force to make an initial review of the **COG vision, mission and strategic plan** in early 2010 prior to evaluating the costs, benefits and timing of a more comprehensive review and possible revision. The COG strategic plan was last adopted in February 2005. The COG Board Chairman will also ask a group of COG leaders and members to review participation and program content from previous COG annual leadership retreats to ensure that the proposed July 2010 retreat advances COG’s mission and program goals, and is mindful of time and cost-constraints.
5. COG management will identify, recommend COG Board action and implement new measures to **increase revenue and reduce expenses** in 2010 and ongoing. COG will also examine opportunities to direct its activities to **assist local governments in better managing costs**, for example, through new products or services support by COG’s cooperative purchasing program and information and best practices on employee health insurance and benefits administration.