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*Adjunct Member

Date: June 8, 2011
To: COG Board of Directors
Through: David Robertson, Executive Director
RE: Public Affairs Outreach Effort – Latino Community
From: Jeanne Saddler, Director Office of Public Affairs

Background

Throughout its history, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has worked to include all segments of the metropolitan community in its plans and programs by working with elected officials, addressing community groups and by aggressively using media outlets.

Last month, several area elected officials and community leaders wrote to the COG Board asking COG to consider establishing a partnership with the non-profit organization EVS Communications, to help support the production of *Linea Directa*, a weekly Spanish-language public affairs program.

The award-winning show has provided practical information on health, education, social services and environmental issues for 21 years. It is perhaps the only show on commercial Spanish-language television that offers solution-oriented discussions of issues such as the foreclosure crisis, the legal consequences of drinking and driving and parental involvement in education.

Outreach to the Latino community through the Spanish-language media is more difficult because of the need to provide Spanish-speaking subject-matter experts who also are familiar with the programs we are promoting. Because of the rapid growth of the Latino community, however, it is important that we pursue a Spanish language outreach program that addresses COG's important regional initiatives.

Proposal and Recommendation

EVS Communications has asked that COG contribute \$20,000 to support the production of four shows over a six-month period. The shows would focus on important COG initiatives potentially including: pedestrian safety, health,

777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002
202.962.3200 (Phone) 202.962.3201 (Fax) 202.962.3213 (TDD)

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childhood obesity and foster care and adoption. Each of those shows would be re-broadcast twice more over a 12-month period, providing a total of 12 shows during the entire year. A production budget prepared by EVS is attached.

Enhanced outreach to the Spanish-speaking community, as well as other aspects of our diverse National Capital Region is consistent with COG's strategic plan and the expectations of members, funders and partners.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the EVS proposal, COG staff recommends a scaled-back pilot that will enable COG to measure the effectiveness of the partnership with EVS and *Linea Directa*.

I have included a companion proposal that suggests that the COG Board approve an investment of \$7,500 from the FY 2012 contingency reserve (\$275,000 currently budgeted and unallocated) to support the production of one full show and a half segment of a second show. Those shows would address pedestrian safety and obesity. The focus of these programs was chosen because of the relevance to the target audience and the more public-focused aspects of these programs. In addition, COG will include an evaluation and impact measure as part of this effort to assess if *Linea Directa* is an effective outreach strategy and partner to communicate with the Spanish-speaking community in the National Capital Region. Depending on the outcomes from the pilot effort, COG can assess if this outreach tool warrants replication or expansion in FY 2012-2013.

A financial commitment from COG would allow the Office of Public Affairs to broaden its outreach efforts by working with EVS Communications. OPA has put together outreach efforts over the years that involved only an extra commitment of time and energy from its staff. In addition to its aggressive pursuit of coverage by the traditional media, OPA has developed and supported the use of social media outlets by COG, and designed a *Region Forward* web site and a blog, *The Daily Measure*. Blogs and social media are excellent ways to appeal to young, well-educated demographic groups. However, it has become clear in recent weeks that supporting a variety of outreach efforts is critically important to the success of *Region Forward* as well as all of COG's initiatives. The following are the principal reasons COG and its Office of Public Affairs needs to mount a more vigorous outreach plan, and why we should begin immediately with a partnership with EVS Communications and *Linea Directa*.

Relevance. We need to emphasize more clearly how new regional developments will benefit all residents. We also must lead high profile efforts to make progress on the concerns that are paramount to a large number of our residents including job training, affordable housing and health issues. *Linea Directa*'s audience is an excellent place to begin such an effort.

Today's Minority is Tomorrow's Majority. Through the *Region Forward* initiative, we plan to build a more accessible, sustainable, livable and prosperous

region in the middle of the century. To achieve that goal, we must reach out to the demographic group that is most likely to comprise the majority of our residents in 2050 and involve them in regional development. Between 2000 and 2010, the nation's Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, or four times the nation's 9.7 percent growth rate. According to the 2010 Census, Hispanic residents comprise 15 percent of the population in the National Capital Region, with the largest numbers residing in Fairfax and Montgomery Counties. The latest census figures show the Latino population grew by 33 percent in the Northeastern part of the country and by 57 percent in the South.

An Investment Supplemented by Low Cost Creative Programs. Effective COG outreach programs should be directed at all demographic, economic and ethnic groups in the region. It must touch on our bread-and-butter work programs - transportation, land-use and the environment - as well as the more immediate, people-oriented issues of health and public safety. COG's Office of Public Affairs is committed to seeking grants from private foundations to help supplement such an effort. We also will continue to pursue creative outreach initiatives that will require very little investment. I am confident that my office, with the support and direction of our executive director, can accomplish a great deal of outreach with some support from the Board. The Office of Public Affairs has developed the following initiatives over the last few years: audio podcasts; use of social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter; a *Region Forward* web site and blog; and on-line chats with the *Washington Post*. These efforts are in addition to maintaining strong news coverage by the traditional media, and occasional advertising programs. A partnership with EVS Communications to produce segments of *Linea Directa* would be a great initial step toward broadening our outreach efforts.

Proposed Request: Linea Directa Production Budgets

Items	1.5 Programs	Four Programs
1. Producer/Editor	\$ 2,000	\$ 6,000
2. Host/Assoc.Producer	\$ 1,250	\$ 4,000
3. Director (NBC4 Studio)	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
4. Production Assistants	\$ 500	\$ 1,000
5. Equipment Rental/Maintenance	\$ 1,250	\$ 4,000
6. Tape, HD Conversion, Supplies	\$ 500	\$ 1,000
7. Overhead, Office Expenses	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
Total	\$ 7,500	\$ 20,000

Linea Directa receives in-kind production services through a partnership with NBC4 and Telemundo Washington, an affiliate of NBC4.

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