



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – October 2023
DATE: October 4, 2023

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – At the September 20 meeting, the TPB approved the *2023 National Capital Region Freight Plan*. Board members received updates on new federal funding programs for carbon reduction, the U.S. EPA Climate Reduction Planning Grant for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area, and the COG Round 10 Cooperative Forecasts.

Climate, Energy & Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – At the September CEEPC meeting, committee members discussed setting new targets to encourage the expansion of clean energy use as a follow up to the COG Board discussion on solar and renewable energy earlier in the month. Committee members also approved a joint letter to support updated federal fuel economy standards and received a briefing on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) – At its September meeting, MWAQC approved an update to the 2008 ozone standard State Implementation Plan. The plan, which is a revision to the original 2008 ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) maintenance plan, includes changes to on-road motor vehicle emissions budgets for volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrogen oxides (NOX). The plan will be submitted to the EPA for approval. To support including an equity lens into its work program activities, MWAQC established an Environmental Justice Subcommittee. The subcommittee will be tasked with the development of a resource guide and toolkit over the upcoming months.



12th Annual Chesapeake Bay and Water Quality Forum

At the forum held during the Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) meeting, leaders at every level of government—federal, state, and local officials—gathered to discuss the status of the Bay restoration and local water quality efforts. Participants noted the importance of local-level community engagement—conveying the reasons for and the benefits of stream restoration projects, as well as discussing stormwater runoff and work by utilities to monitor and remove per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals.

[Read the highlight](#)

Human Services Policy Committee (HSPC) – At the September HSPC meeting, the committee received a briefing from the National Council on Aging on the latest trends in scams targeting older adults and current national efforts to combat these acts. The Fairfax County Police Department presented an overview of efforts to prevent and respond to scams at the local level. In addition, the committee received an overview of the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Act, including strategies to address senior food insecurity in the District of Columbia.

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Stakeholder engagement – Clark Mercer addressed a joint gathering of COG’s Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee and Cooperative Forecasting Subcommittee at Amazon HQ2, discussing the region’s housing and transit goals. Additionally, he participated in the Budgeting for Equity event, co-hosted by COG and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. In September, Mercer also met with representatives from the Board of Trade, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance.



COG’s Planning Directors Committee and Cooperative Forecasting Subcommittee gathered for a case study on revitalization in National Landing. The group toured Amazon HQ2 and discussed strategies for smart growth—including diverse housing opportunities and multi-modal transit.

Car Free Day – On September 22, Car Free Day 2023 was a huge success. COG’s Commuter Connections exceeded its target of securing more than 5,000 pledges. 5,000 participants took the pledge to go car free or car lite. They showed support for a more sustainable future for our metropolitan Washington region.

Clean Air Partners – COG’s Clean Air Partners program and Washington Gas hosted an eco-driving exhibit at the Washington Nationals game on September 21. The exhibit featured air quality messages and tips on how to reduce pollution. It included a head-turning visual—a vehicle encased in a clear plastic bubble to help people “see” the amount of emissions they produce—and also promoted Car Free Day by registering people to pledge to go car free.

Homeland Security and Public Safety – On September 19, COG hosted and facilitated a meeting between senior Verizon representatives and local public safety leadership and stakeholders to discuss the services and capabilities Verizon is providing to agencies across the region. Over 100 individuals participated in the hybrid discussion, representing a variety of public safety disciplines, including law enforcement, fire/rescue, 911 centers, interoperable communications, cybersecurity, and health/medical.

Festival Del Río Anacostia– On September 30, COG’s Anacostia Watershed Restoration Program and our partner agencies and organizations celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by hosting the annual festival to help people connect with nature and learn about the Anacostia river. There were family-friendly activities and cultural performances.

Transportation Planning – On September 26-29, COG transportation staff attended the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Annual Conference in Cleveland. Program Director Timothy Canan moderated a panel titled *Scenario Planning: How to Plan for the Unknown* and Program Director Lyn Erickson moderated a panel on *Innovative Public Engagement*.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Metro – COG issued a statement on Metro’s financial update and the activities of its Metro work groups. The statement drew coverage from various outlets, including the Washington Post, Washington City Paper, NBC4, and Telemundo DC.

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

Government shutdown – COG issued a statement on the looming federal government shutdown, which drew coverage from various outlets including WTOP, MyMCMedia, Frederick News-Post, and Univision DC.

[MyMCM](#) – quotes COG Chair Kate Stewart

Economy – COG’s Chief Administrative Officers Committee letter to the Office of Management and Budget on the benefits of increased in-person work for federal employees garnered additional media coverage, including WAMU.

[WAMU](#) – interview with COG Executive Director Clark Mercer

Car Free Day – COG’s Commuter Connections celebrated Car Free Day on September 22. It drew coverage from several local outlets, such as the Prince William Times, Prince George’s County TV, and WUSA 9.

[WUSA9](#) – quotes COG Commuter Connections Director Nicholas Ramfos

Foster Parents of the Year – Prince William County couple who won the COG regional award is profiled by InsideNova.

[InsideNova](#) – profiled Foster Parents of the Year

Air quality engine repower project – COG Climate, Energy and Air Programs Director discusses project to improve air quality for rail workers, customers and the community surrounding Union Station and Ivy City.

[Washington Post](#) – COG Climate, Energy and Air Programs Director Jeff King