

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Supporting the region's transportation funding, water quality, climate and energy innovation, air quality, workforce development, human services, and emergency preparedness

January 2018



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The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

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CERTAINTY AND ADEQUACY OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Support Federal Funding for the Region's Metrorail System

The Metrorail system is the centerpiece of the metropolitan Washington region's transportation system and the backbone of its economy. Almost half of all federal employees use the Metrorail and bus system to commute to work. The federal government should act to provide its share of funding for the Metrorail system that its employees and the region depend on. The federal government should partner with the region to generate and dedicate the additional funding needed for a state of good repair. Specifically ensuring the continuation of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) beyond FY2019 to fund the federal government's annual appropriations for Metro's capital improvement budget.

Support Additional, Reliable, and Recurring Federal Transportation Infrastructure Funding

The National Capital Region's transportation infrastructure serves not just the region, but the nation's federal government and its international partners. The funding needed to maintain the National Capital Region's transit, railroad, and highway infrastructure in a state of good repair is chronically underfunded and must be enhanced. Recurring and reliable funding to maintain and enhance operations on all federal facilities is a priority. At the state and local levels, the region should work to establish a recurring, reliable, and dedicated source of additional funding that is bondable at the highest possible level to maintain the Metro system at a state of good repair.

Support Fixing the Deficit in the Federal Transportation Trust Fund (TTF)

For several years there has been a gap between the TTF's revenue and expenditure needs – these shortfalls have been closed primarily with short-term measures. The FAST Act only provides funding through 2020 and covers those shortfalls through short term measures. This structural deficit has not been fixed and will return after 2020 with a continued growing deficit if not treated as a top priority.

Support Funding for Next Generation Transportation Systems

The need for a more efficient and safer means of transportation is imperative to help achieve the nation's Energy, Efficiency, and Environmental quality goals. The private sector has made significant investments to advance the use of vehicles using alternative modes of energy, and technology assisted vehicle operations. Public sector investments are needed to prepare transportation infrastructure to be able to utilize and support the new technology to build the next generation of transportation systems where travel is more efficient and safe.

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Support Investments in Water Infrastructure

Support mechanisms such as tax credits, infrastructure banking, Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) funding, state revolving funds (SRFs), and tax exemption status for municipal bonds. Ensure that investments built in local infrastructure to meet water permit load allocations and handle future population and economic growth are protected. Enhance infrastructure investments with investments in workforce development to ensure the availability of skilled water system operators.

Ensure Stormwater Regulatory Feasibility

Endorse legislation that supports a feasible pace for MS4 stormwater permits, and applies the “Maximum Extent Practicable” standard. Support flexibility for local funding for stormwater management. Ensure that reporting requirements are reasonable.

Support Climate and Flood Resiliency Initiatives

Support funding to address robust climate change analysis, adaptation and resiliency planning, flood control and management, and development and coordinated implementation of local best practices.

Ensure Local Government Input

Ensure that local governments and wastewater and drinking water utilities are given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on management decisions about the Chesapeake Bay and local water quality.

Support Affordability and Regulatory Flexibility

Support cost-effective approaches for scheduling and financing of water quality programs, including efforts for streamlining permits, and flexibility for achieving nutrient and sediment reduction, including trading.

Support Water Security

Support water quality, wastewater, and drinking water security and resiliency research, planning, and programmatic support.

Support Drinking Source Water Protection

Support drinking water source protection policies and programs that ensure people’s basic need for a clean, safe, and abundant water supply is reliably met.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY INNOVATION & AIR QUALITY PROTECTION

Support Deployment of Clean Energy Innovation and Technology

Encourage and support investment in energy-sector innovation across sectors to increase energy efficiency and transition to clean energy sources. Support and protect regulatory and policy frameworks that enhance investment certainty, improve transparency and access to data. Enable business model innovation and encourage and expand the adoption of energy efficiency and clean, distributed energy generation technologies and infrastructure, and support for low and zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure.

Expand Clean Energy Finance

Expand options for and improve access to clean energy finance at the state and local levels. Foster cost effective and efficient market frameworks and reasonable regulatory frameworks that support clean energy investment across all sectors. Establish and enable key partnerships, institutions, agencies, plans, and programs to support sustainable clean energy incentives and lower the cost of doing business in the clean energy sector.

Enhance Energy Security and Resilience

Prioritize and protect funding for energy-sector infrastructure to improve grid resilience and reliability. Support policies and funding for energy improvements such as energy efficiency, cyber security, microgrids, district energy systems, and storage technology, especially when coupled with clean energy generation. Support community-based efforts and public-private partnerships to improve climate and energy resilience at the local level.

Support Policies that Preserve and Protect Regional Air Quality and Public Health

Support strong policies, regulations, and funding necessary to preserve improvements in air quality and strengthen the region's ability to meet current and future air quality standards that are protective of public health and welfare. Expand efforts to increase and speed adoption of low-emitting technology solutions.

Ensure Local Government Input

Ensure that local governments are recognized and given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on climate and clean energy programs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Support Alignment of Workforce Development and Job Creation

Support federal legislation to focus on workforce development and job creation at the local level, and efforts to develop industry standard credentialing and skills programs for sectors experiencing job growth in the region. Support legislation and programs that fund local job development, career and technical education, and overall more closely align education and job creation.

Support Efforts to End Homelessness and Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing

Work with federal, state, and local Continuums of Care throughout the region to ensure that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring through implementation of a “Housing First” approach. Increasing the supply of supportive housing provides opportunities for wrap-around services that promote housing stability and independent living. Increasing the supply of housing affordable to low-income residents helps prevent homelessness from occurring, and can positively impact residents’ lives through better health, educational, and occupational outcomes.

Support Regional Emergency Response Preparedness

Continue to support emergency response preparedness programs that advance and improve response preparedness to existing and emerging threats. Work with local and state partners to promote value added outcomes from successful grant funded initiatives that continue to increase capacity, capability, and developed standards for regional response in the National Capital Region.

Support Local Governments and Activity Centers

Work with local governments to support sound land use planning which focuses on employer retention and new job growth in the region’s mixed-use Activity Centers.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Support Efforts to Combat Opioid and Substance Abuse

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase resources to combat the opioid crisis and substance abuse throughout the region which may include: improving access to treatment and recovery services, promoting prevention education, reducing the stigma of drug abuse, supporting research on pain management, and ensuring awareness of overdose-reversing drugs.

Increase Availability of and Access to Mental Health Services

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase access to and availability of mental health services throughout the region to include psychiatric hospital beds, drug treatment programs, counseling, and other outpatient services; continued expansion of crisis intervention, mental health courts, and diversion programs where treatment is indicated rather than incarceration; and re-entry programs to reduce recidivism rates of mental health consumers.

Support Healthy Food Access and Local Farmers

Protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) to maintain the national nutrition safety net which provides critical state and local funding for vulnerable low-income individuals and families in the region. Support passage of legislation such as the Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act to provide assistance to farmers, to communities in need of increased access to healthy food, and for development of infrastructure to connect farmers to consumers.

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