



## Summary Report

Economy Forward  
Washington, D.C. – September 27, 2013



More than 100 leaders from around metropolitan Washington – elected officials and community representatives - met last week to identify the most important steps needed to develop the region and ensure it remains one of the world’s most attractive places to live and do business.

The day-long, interactive session also produced strong support for more collaboration among the area’s local jurisdictions, perhaps through a regional decision-making and implementation authority. The meeting focused on transportation and land-use concerns, which grew out of a series of strategies called *Economy Forward* developed in recent years at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The strategies aim to connect a diverse web of Activity Centers – or mini-downtown locations that include residential, business and retail segments – to convenient transit and transportation hubs.

The participants were seated around large round tables to discuss the need to increase regional collaboration, develop strong Activity Centers and improve support for the region’s transportation needs. Between a third and half of the participants were already familiar with those proposals. Using computers and voting keypads, the participants’ conclusions were tabulated by America Speaks, a nonprofit company that specializes in enhancing citizen engagement.

This document summarizes the ideas generated at participants in the meeting and polling results.

### **Preliminary Polling: Who was at the meeting and what did they know about the plans?**

#### **Where do you live?**

DC	21%
Maryland	31%
Virginia	48%

#### **What sector do you represent?**

Elected Office	14%
Government Staff	30%
Business	13%
Non-profit	24%
Community/Citizen Leader	14%
Other	6%

#### **What best describes your knowledge of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan?**

I know a lot	39%
I know some	45%
I don't know much at all	15%

#### **What best describes your knowledge of the Activity Centers Strategic Development Plan?**

I know a lot	35%
I know some	55%
What's an Activity Center?	10%

#### **What best describes your knowledge of Region Forward or Economy Forward?**

I know a lot about both	35%
I know a lot about Region forward, but not Economy Forward	36%
I know a lot about Economy forward, but not Region Forward	4%
I don't know much about either, but I am a forward thinker	25%

## Table Discussions

Over the course of several hours, participants talked in small groups and generated ideas around each of the following topics:

- Regional Issues of Greatest Concern
- Challenges to Collaboration
- Creating Vibrant Activity Centers
- Regional Transportation Priorities

For each discussion, the theme team reviewed ideas from the table discussions and generated a list of the most common themes from all the tables which was then reported back to participants. For all but the Regional Issues discussion, the participants were then asked to use their individual polling keypads to prioritize the list of themes.



## Regional Issues of Greatest Concern

- Integrating various planning processes like transportation, environment & development so we don't miss the boat
- Committing to funding transportation
- Ensuring that economic development is coordinated, equitable, and forward-looking
- Overcoming competition between our jurisdictions – need to collaborate to be competitive as a region
- Providing greater transportation connectivity and options
- Planning for environmental sustainability
- Reduce congestion

## Challenges to Collaboration

Which 2 of these challenges are holding us back the most in acting regionally? (% of participants)

- No regional decision-making and implementation authority – “region needs one voice” (55%)
- No incentive for regional collaboration – “we’ve never had an economic incentive to collaborate” (49%)
- Competition between jurisdictions (37%)
- Too much fragmentation of services and funding (21%)
- Lack of communication regarding goals and priorities at each level of government (15%)
- Not enough trust between local governments and business - “businesses often see government as adversarial” (10%)

## Creating Vibrant Activity Centers

For creating vibrant activity centers, which 3 will be the most important to implement? (% of participants)

- Improve accessibility to and within Activity Centers through a variety of transportation options (54%)
- Focus development around existing infrastructure and transportation (49%)
- “Create places where people want to be” – “attractive & welcoming to diverse groups” (38%)
- Ensure a balance of jobs and housing (32%)
- Invest strategically in specific Activity Centers (29%)
- Understand unique characteristics and market conditions of each Activity Center (27%)
- Build public-private partnerships; leverage private investment (24%)
- Increase public involvement to identify local priorities (ex. Charrettes) (17%)
- Make affordable housing options available (14%)

For creating vibrant activity centers, which 3 will be the most challenging to implement? (% of participants)

- Make affordable housing options available (77%)
- Ensure a balance of jobs and housing (50%)
- Invest strategically in specific Activity Centers (36%)
- Improve accessibility to and within Activity Centers through a variety of transportation options (33%)
- Build public-private partnerships; leverage private investment (30%)
- Increase public involvement to identify local priorities (ex. Charrettes) (26%)
- “Create places where people want to be” – “attractive & welcoming to diverse groups” (17%)
- Focus development around existing infrastructure and transportation (14%)
- Understand unique characteristics and market conditions of each Activity Center (0%)

### Regional Transportation Priorities

Which 3 will be most important in implementing our regional transportation priorities? (% of participants)

- Develop a dedicated regional funding stream (gas tax, sales tax, etc) (58%)
- Use what we already have (existing transportation infrastructure) to create new options (42%)
- Increase public engagement so people better understand needs, priorities & consequences of not acting (36%)
- Build partnerships with big employers to anchor activity centers – Federal government, hospitals, etc (34%)
- Create a performance system with measurable goals and outcomes (34%)
- Create a regional transportation authority with power to regulate, prioritize & implement (32%)
- Focus on small improvements first “low hanging fruit” that has a big pay off to rebuild public trust (28%)
- Move beyond the big picture to identify specific priority projects (13%)



In addition to identifying the most common ideas, the theme team also identified some “gems”: ideas that only appeared once, but seemed interesting and worth sharing with all of the participants.

#### Creating Vibrant Activity Centers - GEMS

- Create a regional infrastructure bank to develop new revenue sources
- “Health needs to be part of the vision for activity centers”
- Create incentives for home ownership (not rentals)
- Make information about transportation systems integrated and accessible to all

#### Regional Transportation Priorities - GEMS

- Make transportation network more adaptable to meet the needs of future growth even those we can't foresee
- Get region to advocate together in States & the Hill for transportation funding



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HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE REGION