



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wednesday, April 10, 2024
12:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.
Walter A. Scheiber Board Room

Virtual participation available for members upon request
Public livestream on website

AGENDA

- 12:00 P.M.** **1. CALL TO ORDER**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
- 2. CHAIR'S REPORT**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
- A. New date/location for May board meeting**
- 12:05 P.M.** **3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
- 12:10 P.M.** **4. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
- 5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM MARCH 13, 2024**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
- Recommended Action: Approve minutes.**
- 6. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
- Recommended Action: There are no items on the consent agenda.**
- 12:20 P.M.** **7. UNIFIED VISION FOR TRANSIT SERVICE IN THE REGION**
Charles Allen, COG Board Chair
Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
Paul Smedberg, WMATA Board Chair
Randy Clarke, WMATA General Manager & CEO
- The board will discuss development of a unified vision for transit service in the region.
- Recommended Action: Receive briefing.**

12:50 P.M. 8. CONSERVING TREES AND FORESTS IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

*Penny Gross, Former Fairfax County Supervisor
Brian LeCouteur, COG Principal Environmental Planner
Michael Knapp, COG Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee Chair*

The board will be briefed on the state of the region's tree canopy, the development of a new regional goal, and strategies for action at the local level.

Recommended Action: Receive briefing and adopt Resolution R14-2024.

1:15 P.M. 9. COMMUTER CONNECTIONS – 50 YEARS HELPING THE REGION GET TO WORK

*Kanti Srikanth, COG Deputy Executive Director for Metropolitan Planning
Dan Sheehan, COG Transportation Operations Program Director*

The board will be briefed on Commuter Connections, a program coordinated by the Transportation Planning Board at COG to manage congestion and provide free information to employers and commuters on the best commuting options in the region. The program promotes use of ridesharing, transit usage, walking and biking as alternatives to commuting in single occupant vehicles in many ways including offering financial rewards.

Recommended Action: Receive briefing.

1:35 P.M. 10. A PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING IN THE NCR

*Lyn Erickson, COG Transportation Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
Rachel Beyerle, COG Transportation Communications Manager*

The board will be briefed on A People's Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the National Capital Region. The TPB designed this booklet to explain how and where transportation decisions are made in this region, the role the TPB plays in coordinating this process, and the ways in which local residents, businesses, and other community members can participate in transportation planning and funding decisions.

Recommended Action: Receive briefing.

1:55 P.M 11. OTHER BUSINESS

2:00 P.M. 12. ADJOURN

The next COG Board Meeting will take place in-person on Wednesday, May 1 from 12:00 – 2:00 P.M at The Mayflower Hotel.

AGENDA ITEM #2

CHAIR'S REPORT

AGENDA ITEM #3

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – April 2024
DATE: April 3, 2024

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – At its March meeting, the TPB adopted four resolutions: funding for Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside projects, an amendment to carry over funds from the MPO's FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), new funding for the FY 2025 TPB Work Program, and funding for the FY 2025 Commuter Connections Work Program. Tasks under both FY 2025 work programs begin on July 1, 2024. The board also received a briefing on the Visualize 2050 National Capital Region Transportation Plan project inputs and draft scope of work for the air quality conformity analysis.

Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) – At the March CBPC meeting, the committee approved the FY 2024 work program and budget. The members received an update on state and federal legislation and heard from three different water supply experts discussing water supply resilience in metropolitan Washington. The committee was notified about new federal funding that will be used to initiate a Potomac River Secondary Water Source investigation study via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The study is expected to take three years to complete at an estimated cost of \$3 million (half federal and half local funding).

Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – At the March CEEPC meeting, COG staff provided an overview of the committee's role for newcomers, as well as briefed members on the 2024 legislative sessions in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Lastly, the CEEPC Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee presented the proposed tree canopy goal for the region and asked for input on the resolution that will be considered in the April COG Board of Directors meeting.



Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Projects

The TPB approved \$19.5 million in federal Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program funding for 15 non-highway transportation projects in Virginia. The program provides funding for small-scale projects, such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, trails, and safe routes to school (SRTS) projects that are considered "alternatives" to traditional highway construction.

[Learn more about the projects that received funding](#)

Human Services Policy Committee – At the March meeting, the committee received a briefing from the Urban Institute on evidence-based strategies to reduce youth gun and gang violence. They also heard from the DC Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which discussed youth involvement in the juvenile justice system, youth arrests, and effective prevention and intervention initiatives. Additionally, an official from Peace for DC, shared her organization's community-based approaches to youth violence interruption.

OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FARM tour – FARM Chair and City of Fairfax Councilmember Jon Stehle, along with Mayor Catherine Read, hosted FARM's New Member Orientation in Fairfax in early March. New and returning members shared priorities and met one another over lunch. Members also heard from speakers from the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, COG, and several Fairfax staff. The meeting concluded with a demonstration at Fairfax's 24-hour compost drop off station, next to the community garden on city property.

Bike to Work Day – COG's Commuter Connections program and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) are partnering for Bike to Work Day, which will take place on Friday, May 17 in over 100 pit stops throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. This event offers a healthy and enjoyable start to the workday. Visit www.biketoworkmetrodc.org for more information and to register.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Water Supply Study – New federal funding from the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill was secured to support a regional study via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

[WTOP – quotes COG Water Resources Program Director Steve Bieber](#)

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program – The TPB funding received coverage from Patch, FFXnow, Loudoun Times, and WTOP.

[FFXnow – Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program](#)



Fire symposium, emergency exercises enhance regional response

Fire professionals from across the region gathered on March 19 and 20 at the biennial COG Fire Health & Safety Symposium, sharing valuable, life-saving information for the region's firefighters. COG also helped convene exercises focused on coordinating across multiple agencies during emergencies for COG's Emergency Preparedness Council, SWAT and Public Order Subcommittees, and an exercise with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and DC Homeland Security Emergency Management Agency on water systems.

[Learn more about these events](#)

AGENDA ITEM #4

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM #5

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002**

**MINUTES
COG Board of Directors Meeting
March 13, 2024**

BOARD MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES: See attached chart for attendance.

SPEAKERS:

Karla Bruce, Fairfax County Chief Equity Officer

Samia Byrd, Arlington County Department of Community Planning Housing & Development Director

Sunil Kumar, COG Principal Environmental Engineer

Kurt Erickson, Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP)

Christine Sherman Baker, Arlington County Vision Zero Project Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COG Board Chair Charles Allen called the virtual meeting to order at 12:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Energy and Water Appropriations Bill approved by Congress and signed by President Biden last week contains \$500,000 in funding for a secondary water source study for metropolitan Washington.

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

COG Executive Director Clark Mercer briefed the board on the following:

- DC Council Performance Oversight Hearing where Executive Director Clark Mercer testified on COG's work in the region.
- Metro FY2025 operating funding update: Mr. Mercer shared the status of legislation in the District, Maryland and Virginia to provide additional funding to Metro in FY2025.
- The Transportation Planning Board at COG is seeking public feedback through March 30 on the Visualize 2050 National Capital Region Transportation Plan before TPB conducts an Air Quality Conformity Analysis of major projects in the plan.
- COG's Commuter Connections program and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association are partnering again for Bike to Work Day, which will be held on Friday, May 17 at over 100 pit stops throughout the region.
- COG has released a new Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) for our MSA (metropolitan statistical area). The plan, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, was prepared for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program.
- COG brought together our multi-sector Emergency Preparedness Council for a tabletop exercise exploring regional preparedness for, response to, and recovery from an attack of electrical substations.

4. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

There were no amendments to the agenda.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM February 14, 2024

The minutes from the February 14, 2024, board meeting were approved.

Action: The board approved the February 14, 2024 meeting minutes.

6. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

A. Resolution R12-2024 – Resolution authorizing COG to receive a grant, procure and enter into a contract to conduct phase 39 of the Continuous Airport System Planning (CASP) Program

Action: The board adopted Resolution R12-2024.

7. REGIONAL EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Fairfax County Chief Equity Officer Karla Bruce and Arlington County Department of Community Planning Housing and Development Director Samia Byrd briefed the board on the development of regional equitable development principles to serve as a guide to centering equity in local comprehensive plans.

Action: The board adopted Resolution R13-2024.

8. COG’S AIR QUALITY PROGRAM & CLEAN AIR PARTNERS

COG Principal Environmental Engineer Sunil Kumar presented on what COG does to track air quality, shared regional communications, and planning efforts to address unhealthy air days in the upcoming ozone season.

Action: Received briefing and discussed.

9. HOW SAFE ARE OUR ROADS? REPORT & REGIONAL ROADWAY SAFETY

The board was briefed by Washington Regional Alcohol Program President Kurt Erickson where he discussed WRAP’s annual analysis of the impact of alcohol and drug-related fatal and serious injury crashes in the region. Following the report, Arlington County Vision Zero Project Manager Christine Sherman Baker discussed approaches to address roadway safety regionally and learn about a regional data-driven anti-drunk driving campaign.

Action: Received briefing and discussed.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11. ADJORN

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

**COG Board of Directors
Virtual Meeting
March 13, 2024 Attendance**

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Y/N</u>	<u>Alternate</u>	<u>Y/N</u>
<i>District of Columbia</i>				
Executive	Hon. Muriel Bowser		Ms. Beverly Perry	Y
	Mr. Kevin Donahue		Mr. Tomas Talamante	Y
Council	Hon. Phil Mendelson	Y	Hon. Brianne Nadeau	Y
	Hon. Charles Allen	Y		
<i>Maryland</i>				
City of Bowie	Hon. Tim Adams		Hon. Dufour Woolfley	
Charles County	Hon. Reuben Collins	Y	Hon. Thomasina Coates	
City of Frederick	Hon. Michael O'Connor	Y	Hon. Kelly Russell	
Frederick County	Hon. Jessica Fitzwater	Y	Ms. Victoria Venable	
City of College Park	Hon. Denise Mitchell	Y	Hon. Fazlul Kabir	
City of Gaithersburg	Hon. Robert Wu		Hon. Neil Harris	
City of Greenbelt	Hon. Emmett Jordan	Y	Hon. Kristen Weaver	
City of Laurel	Hon. Keith Sydnor		Hon. James Kole	
Montgomery County - Exec	Hon. Marc Elrich	Y	Mr. Richard Madaleno Ms. Fariba Kassiri Mr. Earl Stoddard	
Montgomery County - Council	Hon. Evan Glass	Y		
Montgomery County - Council	Hon. Kate Stewart	Y		
Prince George's County - Exec	Hon. Angela Alsobrooks		Ms. Tara Jackson	Y
Prince George's County - Council	Hon. Tom Dernoga	Y	Hon. Wanika Fisher	
Prince George's County - Council	Hon. Ingrid Watson	Y	Hon. Krystal Oriadha	
City of Rockville	Hon. Monique Ashton	Y		
City of Takoma Park	Hon. Talisha Searcy	Y		
Maryland General Assembly	Hon. Brian Feldman			
<i>Virginia</i>				
City of Alexandria	Hon. Justin Wilson	Y	Hon. Kirk McPike	
Arlington County	Hon. Libby Garvey	Y		
City of Fairfax	Hon. Catherine Read	Y	Hon. Tom Ross	
Fairfax County	Hon. Rodney Lusk	Y	Hon. Daniel Storck	
Fairfax County	Hon. Jeff McKay		Hon. Andres Jimenez	
Fairfax County	Hon. James Walkinshaw	Y	Hon. Walter Alcorn	
City of Falls Church	Hon. Caroline Lian	Y	Hon. David Snyder	
Loudoun County	Hon. Laura TeKrony	Y		
Loudoun County	Hon. Phyllis Randall		Hon. Koran Saines	
City of Manassas	Hon. Mark Wolfe	Y	Hon. Sonia Vasquez Luna	
City of Manassas Park	Hon. Darryl Moore			
Prince William County	Hon. Deshundra Jefferson	Y	Hon. Kenny A. Boddye	
Prince William County	Hon. Andrea Bailey	Y	Hon. Tom Gordy	
Virginia General Assembly	Hon. Mark Sickles	Y		

Y = present

Total: 29

AGENDA ITEM #6

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

AGENDA ITEM #7

UNIFIED VISION FOR TRANSIT SERVICE IN THE REGION

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002**

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING INCREASED FUNDING FOR METRO

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is comprised of 24 jurisdictions of the National Capital Region's local governments and their governing officials, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and COG provides a focus for action on issues of regional concern; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Metro) is our most significant regional transportation system and has played a critical role in meeting the National Capital Region's socio-economic and mobility needs for close to 50 years; and

WHEREAS, after changing weekday ridership patterns due to shifts in commuting habits following the COVID-19 pandemic, the expiration of federal transit relief, and the rising costs of inflation, Metro identified a Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget deficit of up to \$750 million; and

WHEREAS, the COG Board charged the Chief Administrative Officers Committee to work with WMATA staff to conduct a thorough review of WMATA's cost structure to independently analyze and verify the magnitude of the system's budget deficit, identify ways to optimize the funding needed for FY2025, and to identify actions to provide stability and predictability for WMATA's operating costs into the future; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Administrative Officers Workgroup on WMATA Cost Structure – Interim Report was released in December 2023 making a number of recommendations to address the short-term funding deficit and overall financial stability of Metro; and

WHEREAS, the COG Board established the Metro Funding Strategy Group consisting of local and state elected officials, and senior administrative representatives, and State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), to collectively work on understanding the nature and magnitude of the fiscal challenge faced by WMATA and to identify a path forward to address this issue both in the immediate and longer terms; and

WHEREAS, this ongoing coordination and engagement has helped forge consensus on short-term actions with broad regional support; and

WHEREAS, with support from the administrations, legislation is active in Maryland and Virginia to provide additional operating budget funds to address the deficit in FY2025 and FY2026, with a commitment from the District of Columbia to provide additional funding in FY2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:

- 1) The board commends the work of local and state officials to collaborate on a short-term funding solution for Metro; and

- 2) The board urges the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia to pass the necessary legislation to allocate additional operating funds to address Metro's short-term operating funding deficit in FY2025 and FY2026; and
- 3) The board urges the federal government to act to permanently increase their financial support of both operating and capital funding for Metro; and
- 4) The board urges the continued collaboration of local, state and federal officials, in partnership with the private and nonprofit sectors, to identify long-term funding solutions to ensure financial sustainability for Metro.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT the foregoing resolution was approved by the COG Board of Directors on February 14, 2024.

Amanda Lau COG Communications Specialist I

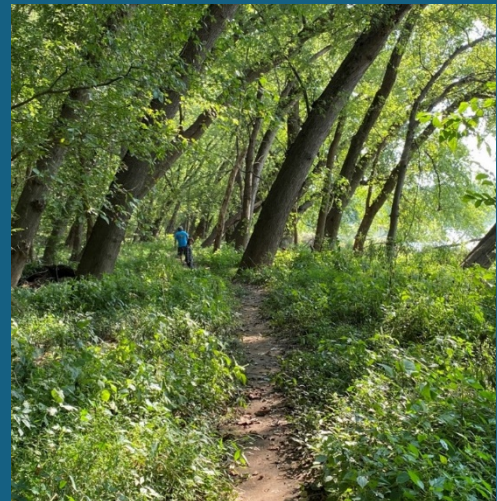
AGENDA ITEM #8

CONSERVING TREES AND FORESTS IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

CONSERVING TREES AND FORESTS IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

Report on the state of the region's tree canopy and its benefits, the development of new regional goals, and strategies for action at the local level

April 2024



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2019, the COG Board of Directors endorsed the establishment of a Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee (RTCS) of the COG Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) charged “with protecting, managing, and expanding urban forestry assets for health and quality of life; optimizing urban forest programs; developing a regional urban forest action plan and canopy goals; inspiring the community to take ownership of efforts to protect and expand urban forests; and integrating urban forestry with Region Forward [COG’s regional vision plan]...” (Resolution R7-2019). This action followed a recommendation contained in the *Tree Canopy Management Strategy* published in May 2018 establishing an ongoing forest policy committee to, in part, develop a regional tree action plan and regional tree canopy goals.

In response to this direction, RTCS has prepared a three-part report to encourage member jurisdictions to strengthen local tree conservation programs and to act collaboratively on matters relating to the protection and management of tree and forest assets to enhance the quality of life, well-being, and natural environment enjoyed by our residents and visitors. Most notably, the report recommends that area leaders adopt a regional tree canopy goal to encourage and assist COG member jurisdictions in monitoring, protecting, and managing their local trees and forests, and where feasible, to coordinate regionally to conserve our tree canopy.

The report outlines various benefits and services offered by tree canopy as well as discussions on recognizing and managing tree risks and costs and the need to monitor and mitigate threats to trees and forests.

Part 1: A Case for Conserving Trees and Forests in the Metropolitan Washington Region

This section presents ten incentives for why COG jurisdictions should take action to increase their local tree conservation and management efforts, including how tree canopy enhances human health and quality of life, helps address environmental equity, builds cohesive neighborhoods, and reduces crime, grows healthy economies, and mitigates climate change/strengthens climate resilience.

Part 2: Tree Canopy Goals for the Metropolitan Washington Region

This section delves into the three tiers of goals for area jurisdictions: one overarching goal for the metropolitan Washington region, intermediate goals based on population density and urbanization, and smaller scale target goals for general land use categories.

According to Chesapeake Bay Program data, tree canopy covered 51.3 percent of metropolitan Washington (2,213,976 acres) in 2014 and 50.6 percent in 2018. The latest estimate of tree canopy coverage for the region was 49.6 percent in 2023. Regional tree canopy loss detected between 2014 and 2018 was 17,133 acres, or an average of 4,383 acres of tree canopy lost each year. Assuming this trend continued until 2050, the total area of canopy loss for the region would equal about 120,000 acres over an almost three-decade period.

Tree Canopy Gain/Loss within the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Member Jurisdictions between 2014 and 2018

	Jurisdiction	Total Acreage of Jurisdiction w/o bodies of water#	Acres of Tree Canopy 2014	Acres of Tree Canopy 2018	% Tree Cover 2014	% Tree Cover 2018	Acres of Tree Canopy Gain/Loss
1	Arlington County, Virginia	16,638.28	5,647.7	5,655.3	33.9%	34.0%	7.6
2	Charles County, Maryland	292,971.63	198,908.4	198,119.6	67.9%	67.6%	788.9
3	Fairfax County, Virginia	250,252.38	140,120.1	139,299.2	56.0%	55.7%	821.0
4	Frederick County, Maryland	422,776.31	179,592.1	181,709.0	42.5%	43.0%	2,116.8
5	Loudoun County, Virginia	330,071.15	147,938.1	145,075.4	44.8%	44.0%	2,862.7
6	Montgomery County, Maryland	315,589.05	153,264.0	147,479.5	48.6%	46.7%	5,784.4
7	Prince George's County, Maryland	308,890.48	168,099.1	160,808.4	54.4%	52.1%	7,290.7
8	Prince William County, Virginia	214,563.21	122,543.7	121,310.1	57.1%	56.5%	1,233.6
9	City of Alexandria, Virginia	9,558.58	2,639.3	2,658.1	27.6%	27.8%	18.8
10*	District of Columbia	39,120.61	15,235.8	14,760.3	38.9%	37.7%	475.5
11	City of Fairfax, Virginia	3,993.88	1,636.5	1,626.6	41.0%	40.7%	9.9
12	City of Falls Church, Virginia	1,309.72	541.1	536.4	41.3%	41.0%	4.6
13	City of Manassas, Virginia	6,299.49	1,502.4	1,498.9	23.8%	23.8%	3.5
14	City of Manassas Park, Virginia	1,941.63	426.0	424.6	21.9%	21.9%	1.4

Source: 2013/2014 and 2017/2018 CBP LULC tree canopy data published in 2022.

Jurisdiction acreage w/o bodies of water data from Census Tiger Data

* Independent Canopy Analysis using 2020 data by PlanIT Geo LLC in 2021

The report recommends three tiers of goals for area jurisdictions:

1. Overarching goal: **The COG Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee recommends adopting a goal of ensuring at least 50 percent tree canopy coverage for the entire region through 2050.** (See Part 2: Section 1)
2. Intermediate Goals based on Population Density and Urbanization: These goals are provided to help communities identify tree canopy goals for watersheds, planning districts, census tracts, and towns and smaller cities. (See Part 2: Section 4)
3. Smaller Scale Target Goals for General Land Use Categories: These target goals identify mature canopy coverage levels that are associated with 18 general classes of land use categories encountered in the COG region. (See Part 2: Section 5)

RTCS recommends that the regional goal and supporting target goals be viewed as fluid and reevaluated once every five years to allow reaction to changing conditions and unforeseeable events. The report goes on to examine how area jurisdictions can support the tree canopy goals through strategies and actions in concert with ones already being implemented. The subcommittee also considered three scenarios to project possible levels of tree canopy coverage between 2022 and

2050 and calculated the value of tree canopy in relation to its air quality, stormwater reduction, and carbon sequestration services, amounting to millions of dollars of benefits each year.

Environmental Services and Benefits Associated with a 10% loss of Existing Canopy

	Annual Air Pollution Removal in LBS	Gallons of Stormwater Runoff Reduced Annually	Tons of Carbon Sequestered Annually
Service	7,983,710/year	616,171,576/year	141,842 tons/year
Monetary Benefit	\$9,643,014/year	\$5,579,099/year	\$26,569,310 tons/year
Accumulated Service over 29-years	231,527,592 lbs.	17,868,975,699 gallons	3,546,051 tons
Monetary Benefit over 29-years	\$279,647,415	\$161,793,881	\$770,510,000

Source: Understanding Your Canopy. Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network. Services and monetary benefits extrapolated from 2018 tree cover data using iTree Landscape software. <https://chesapeaketrees.net/understand-your-canopy/>

Part 3: Identifying the Right Level of Tree Canopy for Your Community

This section is designed to provide a roadmap to help local governments periodically assess the extent and quality of their trees and forests and to use that information to set overarching goals and objectives to guide efforts to sustain those resources.

The report offers 10 steps to provide processes and tools that COG jurisdictions can use to identify achievable canopy goals that balance a wide range of socioeconomic, environmental, and ecological concerns. The subcommittee will serve as the entity to monitor regional progress on the tree canopy goals and update its policy committee and other relevant COG committees on a regular basis going forward.



(David Mark from Pixabay)

FOREWARD

Over four decades of peer-reviewed research clearly demonstrates that trees and forests should be regarded as an indispensable component of public infrastructure. These natural resources provide a wide range of services to COG member jurisdictions. They improve environmental quality and ecological health by improving air and water quality, reducing stormwater runoff, sequestering and storing carbon dioxide, moderating ambient air and surface temperatures in urban spaces, providing habitat and food for wildlife, and more. In addition, more recent research has demonstrated the positive relationships between urban trees and human health, safe and inviting communities, and vibrant economies.

Monitoring the extent and attributes of any resource is essential to managing it effectively. Our regional tree canopy is no exception. We must continue to monitor how our trees and forests are changing in reaction to natural and man-made pressures, and to implement both local and regional strategies to conserve these resources so they can sustain their delivery of important services and benefits. This report provides a roadmap to help local governments to periodically evaluate the extent and quality of their trees and forests. The recommendations are presented in three geographic tiers that range from individual parcels to intermediate-sized areas such as planning districts and watersheds, to the entire COG region.

The goals recommended in this report were generated over a four-year period by members of COG's Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee (RTCS). The process used to generate these recommendations blend empirical data gathered by local urban foresters with data derived from regional land cover/land use data provided by the Chesapeake Conservancy and partners. RTCS is reasonably confident that the goals recommended in this report are realistic and achievable; however, forecasting how tree canopy levels will be impacted by multiple factors that include the effects of climate change on native plant communities; social trends; economic patterns; housing and transportation needs; and the relative effectiveness of laws and ordinances is difficult at best.

The accuracy of the recommended percentages of canopy coverage may ultimately prove less valuable than their capacity to periodically refresh tree conservation as a consideration in ongoing planning and policy making discussions. This could prove especially true if we build in an expectation to reexamine and, if necessary, realign the goals at predefined intervals based on future conditions. **Consequently, we recommend that the three tiers of canopy goals described in this report be treated as fluid and subject to periodic evaluation** (every five years) to allow for adaptation to changing conditions, regional needs, and unforeseeable events.

It should be noted that a substantial number of COG jurisdictions have already adopted tree canopy goals and tree conservation programs at local levels (see Appendix). We anticipate that current events regarding climate change, extreme temperatures, environmental inequity, and unprecedented levels of species extinction on a global basis will prompt even more communities to set local goals and collaborate regionally on matters relating to the protection and management of this key component of our natural systems and infrastructure; one readily found in backyards, along streams, and roads silently delivering important benefits to our families and neighbors, and to which our quality of life, our environmental health, and economies are closely linked.

Regional Tree Canopy Management Subcommittee

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002**

RESOLUTION ADOPTING A NEW REGIONAL TREE CANOPY GOAL

WHEREAS, in 2020, the COG Board of Directors adopted Resolution R45-2020 endorsing an interim climate mitigation goal of 50 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions below 2005 levels by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the Climate, Energy and Environmental Policy Committee (CEEPC) adopted the Metropolitan Washington 2030 Climate and Energy Action Plan (2030 CEAP) to support meeting the Board's climate goals. The 2030 CEAP prioritizes the expansion of tree canopy through planning, funding, and implementation of carbon sequestration and resilient green infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the 2030 CEAP called for the prioritization of expanding tree canopy through strategic planning, enhanced regulations, and improved incentives; and

WHEREAS, COG's Region Forward Vision calls for conserving and enhancing a network of protected open spaces, parks, and green infrastructure which is inclusive of tree canopy which aids the efforts to meet the goals defined in the 2030 CEAP; and

WHEREAS, COG seeks to support integrated multi-sector approaches to accelerate action on climate change and recognizes that enhancing urban forestry and increasing tree canopy coverage are effective strategies for mitigating the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, and sequestering carbon dioxide emissions, thereby contributing to overall climate resilience and mitigation efforts; and

WHEREAS, the COG Board established a Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee under its Climate Energy Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) in 2019 to oversee urban forestry initiatives, including the development of a regional urban forest action plan and tree canopy goal; and

WHEREAS, current tree canopy coverage for entire COG membership area (2,213,976 acres) is estimated at 49.6 percent (Chesapeake Bay Program Land Use/Land Cover Project); and

WHEREAS, studies conducted in the Metropolitan Washington region have indicated a steady decline in tree canopy coverage over the last 25 years, underscoring the need for proactive measures to protect, maintain, and enhance the region's tree canopy; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee working with the staff of the COG member agencies has developed a report entitled, *Conserving Trees And Forests In Metropolitan Washington*, as a resource and reference document to assist in the development of an action plan to guide the efforts of COG member agencies to help the region preserve and enhance regional tree canopy; and

WHEREAS, in developing this resource document environmental equity considerations have been considered from the perspective of inequities in health outcomes associated with lower levels of tree canopy in underserved communities based on studies that shows that increased levels of urban tree canopy are linked with increased levels of human health, socially cohesive neighborhoods, lower crime rates, increased local retail business, and attraction of highly skilled, creative, and productive workforces; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of healthy levels of tree canopy and its contribution to COG's several regional goals of livability, sustainability, prosperity, equity and climate change, the Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee and CEEPC recommend that a goal for maintaining a minimal level of tree canopy in the region be adopted to support and advance several regional goals.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:

1. The Board establishes a regional goal of maintaining a minimum tree canopy coverage of 50 percent across the Metropolitan Washington region, as recommended by the Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee (RTCS); and
2. The Board accepts the *Conserving Trees and Forests in Metropolitan Washington* as a resource document and urges member jurisdictions to develop and implement strategies, policies, and programs to achieve the regional tree canopy goal, including updates to relevant policies, procedures, ordinances and the development of tree planting and preservation initiatives and goals; and
3. The Board requests that CEEPC and the Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee reassess the regional goal and supporting target goals every five years until at least 2050 to evaluate regional efforts to protect, manage, and expand the region's tree and forest assets and to monitor progress towards achieving the established overall tree canopy goal and related target goals in the Metropolitan Washington region.

AGENDA ITEM #9

COMMUTER CONNECTIONS - 50 YEARS HELPING THE REGION GET TO WORK

Commuter Connections is a regional transportation demand management (TDM) program that helps commuters find smarter ways to work. COG coordinates a network of nearly 30 transportation organizations to promote alternatives to driving alone to work, which includes carpooling, vanpooling, taking transit, bicycling, scootering, or walking. Work products and services are developed by COG/TPB staff in concert with the program funders, which include the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia Departments of Transportation (DOTs). These elements are documented within the [Commuter Connections Work Program](#), which is reviewed and endorsed each year by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB).

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Commuter Connections was originally created in 1974 as the Commuter Club, providing one of the first computerized carpool matching systems in the nation. The Commuter Club network consisted of COG, the General Services Administration (GSA), and the Greater Washington Board of Trade. COG provided direct ridematching services to the public, a free service which is still in operation today. In the 1980s, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Prince William County, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission joined the network. Commuter Club network members used COG's ridematching software and shared one regional database.

In the mid-1980s the network changed its name to the RideFinders Network. By 1994, the network had grown in membership to include all Washington D.C. area local governments, a few federal agencies, several Transportation Management Associations, local governments from the Baltimore area, and southern Maryland.

In the mid-1990s the TPB began adopting transportation emissions reduction measures to reduce the emission of certain pollutants by vehicles on the roadway system. Many of these measures were strategies to reduce travel demand and change travel modes. These regional measures were funded by the three state DOTs. The DOTs approached the TPB and COG to help administer some of these TDM strategies across the region. COG and the TPB agreed to expand the service offerings of the RideFinders Network and in 1996, the RideFinders Network changed its name to Commuter Connections with the three state DOTs funding all activities of Commuter Connections. Starting in 1997, new services began to be implemented, annually or biennially, including internet-based services beyond just carpool/vanpool matching: transit route and schedule information, a regional Guaranteed Ride Home program, bicycling to work information, park-and-ride lot and HOV lane information, telecommute/telework program assistance, InfoExpress commuter information kiosks, and employer services.

CURRENT OFFERINGS

Commuter Connections operates several free commute-oriented programs. The proprietary [ridematching system](#) pairs individuals that have similar commutes together for potential carpool and vanpool opportunities. The regional [Guaranteed Ride Home](#) program provides commuters with a free ride home in the event of an unexpected emergency, personal illness, or unscheduled overtime. Several programs provide incentives, such as cash rewards or transportation credits, to encourage commuters to try new modes of commuting, such as carpool, vanpool, transit, or walk/bike, instead of driving alone. These reward programs include [incenTrip](#), [Pool Rewards](#), [Flextime Rewards](#), and [CarpoolNow](#). Commuter Connections also produces resources such as the regional [Commute](#)

[Options Map](#) that includes Park and Ride locations across three states, and a [Commute Cost Calculator](#) to determine the true hidden costs of one's commute.

Regional events such as [Bike to Work Day](#) and [Car Free Day](#) are organized and facilitated by Commuter Connections to help generate excitement about alternative forms of transportation. These regional events, along with the many programs and services listed in the prior paragraph, are marketed to the public through Commuter Connections' robust [mass marketing](#) efforts.

Through the Employer Outreach service, Commuter Connections works with employers to help them establish commuter benefits and commute assistance programs for their employees at their workplace. For instance, [telework resources](#) are available to employers who wish to improve their policies. Commuter Connections employer outreach representatives familiar with each specific jurisdiction provide expert professional assistance to employers for commuting and telework needs.

Commuter Connections has a monitoring and evaluation activity. Feedback is gathered from program participants via surveys; data is analyzed and published into reports such as the [TDM Analysis Report](#). Additionally, the public is surveyed as part of the [State of the Commute](#), which helps provide insights on regional commuting trends. Data procured from these instruments informs decision-making on how to best operate and promote Commuter Connections' programs and services.

RECENT ADVANCEMENTS

Commuter Connections continuously evolves to meet the needs of commuters and employers. Post-pandemic Return to Office (RTO) employer policies have led to "hybrid-friendly" programmatic adjustments. For example, the [Flexible Vanpool](#) program was established to attract riders working hybrid schedules. The program was awarded federal funding through the [Enhancing Mobility Innovation](#) (EMI) program to help improve participant usability and target implementation within COG's [Equity Emphasis Areas](#) (EEAs). Similarly, general outreach efforts have been adjusted to target EEAs more intentionally, where essential workers may not have the option to telework and are therefore more likely to benefit from Commuter Connections programs and services.

The successful incenTrip commute gamification and incentivization mobile app was awarded nearly \$3 million in federal funding through the [Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment](#) (ATCMTD) program to enhance and expand the application throughout the greater Washington, DC megaregion. Technical work began in fall 2020 and concluded in fall 2023. Efforts are now focused on transferring the technology from the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland to COG. Once transferred, COG will rebrand the incenTrip application as "CommuterCash" and operate the program under the Commuter Connections suite of programs and services. CommuterCash is expected to be launched to the public in fall 2024 during an event recognizing the 50th Anniversary of Commuter Connections.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

COG/TPB staff routinely collect data via surveys and participant activity in Commuter Connections programs to determine overall effectiveness. A recent evaluation, which analyzed data collected from July 2021 – June 2023, shows that the program helps reduce 119,500 daily vehicle trips and 2,168,000 vehicle miles of travel each day which results in eliminating 0.4 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and 0.3 tons of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) emissions. Other notable societal benefits include reducing the number of hours commuters collectively spend stuck in traffic, reduced by 2,883 hours per day; and an estimated savings of 93,000 gallons of fuel per day. All told, the Commuter Connections program is estimated to produce a total daily cost savings of \$519,800 for commuters in the region.

AGENDA ITEM #10

A PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING IN THE NCR



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Lyn Erickson, COG Transportation Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
Rachel Beyerle, COG Transportation Communications Manager
SUBJECT: A People's Guide to Transportation Decision-Making in the National Capital Region
DATE: April 10, 2024

OVERVIEW

In early 2024, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) released its newest print publication, *A People's Guide to Transportation Decision-Making in the National Capital Region*.

The *People's Guide* is designed to assist COG and TPB board members, local officials, the staff of local jurisdiction agencies, and the public with understanding how, when, and where transportation decisions are made in the National Capital Region. Along with this, the guide provides an overview of the TPB's role in coordinating the regional transportation planning process and offers examples of how those living and working in the District, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia can participate in transportation policy, planning, and funding decisions.

In addition to the role of the TPB, the guide provides a general overview of the planning, funding, and project selection processes of state department of transportations, public transportation agencies, and local governments. The last section of the guide speaks to how community members can have impact through staying informed; commenting on plans and projects; joining advisory committees; and volunteering in their neighborhood, town, city, or county.

The table of contents of the guide covers the following:

- An Overview of the Transportation Planning Board
- Digging Deeper - Understanding the key roles of state, regional, and local agencies
- Getting Involved – Becoming more involved with the TPB and local transportation activities
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Key agency websites
- Glossary of acronyms

ACCESSING THE GUIDE

Printed copies of the guide will be available at COG and TPB in-person meetings. Additional copies may be requested from Laura Bachle, COG Transportation Planner, at lbachle@mwkog.org or (202) 962-3273. Copies of the guide are also available on the COG website at <https://www.mwkog.org/documents/2024/01/29/a-peoples-guide-to-transportation-decision-making-in-the-national-capital-region/>

AGENDA ITEM #11

OTHER BUSINESS

AGENDA ITEM #12

ADJOURN