

**DRAFT FOR COG BOARD REVIEW ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2021**

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

**RESOLUTION ENDORSING EQUITY EMPHASIS AREAS AS A KEY PLANNING CONCEPT AND TOOL TO  
INFORM DECISION MAKING AND ACTION**

**WHEREAS**, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) comprises the region's 24 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**, in July 2020 the COG Board passed Resolution R26-2020, affirming that its work together will be anti-racist and will advance equity, and that equity will be woven into COG's *Region Forward Vision* to ensure a more prosperous, accessible, livable, sustainable, and equitable future for all area residents and throughout COG's analyses, operations, procurement, programs, and priorities; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018 the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) adopted a methodology to identify census tracts in the region that contain higher concentrations of low-income or racial or ethnic minorities compared to the rest of the region, to ensure its long-range plan does not have disproportionate adverse impacts on these communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the most recent analysis revealed that 351 of the 1,222 census tracts across the region (a number that will be updated periodically) meet the adopted low-income and racial or ethnic minority concentration thresholds and have been identified as Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs); and

**WHEREAS**, these 351 EEAs constitute about 10 percent of the region's land area and house about 30 percent of the region's population, with 214 EEAs located within one-half mile of High-Capacity Transit Station Areas (HCTs) and 340 located within one mile of a Regional Activity Center (RAC); and

**WHEREAS**, COG's multi-faceted regional planning efforts extend beyond transportation and include housing, health, and environment; and

**WHEREAS**, at the COG Leadership Retreat in July 2021 the board took an in-depth look at the TPB's EEA designations and engaged in discussions on how EEAs can be used to advance racial equity in local and regional planning, project implementation, and decision making across all sectors of COG work; and

**WHEREAS**, given COG's commitment to integrate equity considerations in all of its work activities, using the EEA planning construct along with the RACs and HCTs is a way to enable equity considerations in land use and environment and transportation planning to advance the region's housing, transportation, and climate change goals; and

**WHEREAS**, COG member jurisdictions could also use EEAs in a wide range of their jurisdictional activities and services such as housing, education/employment opportunities, environment, and livability, to cultivate a deeper understanding of the nature and magnitude of equity disparities across their jurisdiction and help inform important policy discussions that seek to address disparities.

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

1. EEAs should be prioritized for special consideration in regional and local planning and decision making as a means to further the *Region Forward Vision* for an accessible, livable, sustainable, and prosperous region.
2. COG committees and staff should explore and implement strategies, as appropriate, to further incorporate the consideration of EEAs in planning areas including but not limited to transportation, land-use, housing, climate, and water resources and COG should serve as a forum to elevate the conversation around these topics to provide regional thought leadership and demonstrate the connection between equity and greater prosperity for all.
3. Local governments should prioritize efforts that provide safe and convenient walk, bicycle, and micro-transit access to all of the HCTs and to complete the National Capital Trail Network as a means to provide enhanced mobility and accessibility options to the traditionally underserved population groups in the EEAs.
4. Local governments should consider adopting local resolutions committing to prioritizing EEAs identified within their jurisdiction.