

Policies for a New Era

2011 State Legislative Priorities | Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

As an association of local governments in the National Capital Region, as well as state and federal representatives, COG supports and advances the common interests of its members through its regional platform. The challenges and opportunities facing localities transcend our respective borders and require significant collaboration to achieve mutually beneficial solutions. Only by working together can we tackle the complex issues of economic and workforce development, climate change and energy, and transportation funding with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

States play a significant role in addressing these issues, especially through funding allocation decisions. COG urges that any proposal or strategy aimed at balancing the budget take into consideration the symbiotic relationship between the state and local government. The burden cannot be shifted solely to localities; states must invest their fair share. Funding should be prioritized to maintain core services and other critical needs areas.

In order for the National Capital Region to remain a competitive, attractive place for economic development, states must equitably invest the resources necessary to foster a world class education and training system, protect our natural resources, provide affordable housing, build a sound infrastructure, and improve the quality of life of all residents.

Top Priorities | *COG supports legislation that will:*

Transportation

Establish enhanced or new funding strategies to address regional transportation needs; temporary solutions are not enough. Provide adequate and sustainable or dedicated funding sources necessary to maintain the existing transportation network, support new initiatives, and meet any required federal construction match. Funding should support a comprehensive approach, including the incorporation of multi-modal and intermodal programs.

Chesapeake Bay

Provide state funding support to local governments for programs and projects mandated by EPA and state governments to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries to meet Clean Water Act Requirements. The most critical need is funding for mandated stormwater retrofit projects in already developed areas, which are particularly costly. Policies should provide flexibility for local governments through appropriate alternative programs and support efforts to ensure that non-regulated sources of pollution, especially agricultural sources, meet pollution reduction targets through increased funding, greater regulation, and stricter enforcement.

Stormwater Management

Provide funding to assist local governments with implementation of new stormwater management and watershed restoration requirements, especially for areas with existing development requiring stormwater retrofits. Support stormwater management standards and policies that provide incentives for redevelopment and infill rather than new greenfield development and sprawl. Retain authority for setting stormwater management standards at the state level and provide flexibility for local governments in implementation of new standards.

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Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
2011 State Legislative Priorities | DRAFT | November 2010

Additional Priorities

Air Quality

Support pollution control strategies that improve air quality and reduce ambient concentrations below federal health standards. The commitment to Transportation Emission Reduction Measures (TERMS) and other emission reduction efforts must be maintained to achieve the goal of meeting federal health standards for all criteria pollutants.

Climate and Energy

Manage energy demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency and conservation and greater use of alternative fuels and renewable energy sources. Provide financial and other incentives that promote energy efficiency in the public and private sectors, with priority given to residential and commercial buildings. Support policies that achieve short, medium, and long-term energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Economic & Workforce Development

Increase funding and support for workforce training and economic development programs that make strategic investments in human capital and infrastructure. Policies should expand access to quality education and training opportunities and provide pathways to economic self sufficiency. Such policies will supply the skilled workforce employers need to become and remain economically competitive.

Housing

Include creative strategies to increase the supply and equitable distribution of affordable, accessible and sustainable housing units for persons of all ages and incomes. Such policies should incentivize local governments to locate green, affordable and accessible housing near employment centers, transportation options, and other community amenities. COG also encourages continued efforts to stem foreclosures, specifically those that provide funding and support to increase the capacity of housing counseling agencies, a critical component in responding to the growing demand.

Land Use & Sustainable Growth

Promote balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities by identifying regional centers and establishing actions that support the transformation of these centers into Complete Communities. Policies should link future state and federal investments to integrated regional long-range plans and provide incentives for a collaborative approach to prioritizing land-use, environmental, and transportation decisions and investments at the regional level.

Public Health

Take a holistic approach to providing equitable access to quality healthcare. Focus on wellness and prevention with success measured at the individual, community and population health levels. Societal risk factors, such as education and literacy, working conditions, gender, race and economic status, greatly impact a person's physical and mental health and, therefore, must be included in a comprehensive public health initiative.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Provide a long-term, sustainable commitment to support infrastructure investments through mechanisms such as the clean water and drinking water State Revolving Loan Funds, the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund, and the Maryland Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. Policies should make repair and replacement of worn-out infrastructure and security improvements specifically eligible for funding and provide for a longer repayment period for loans.

This document presents COG's 2011 Legislative Priorities which are consistent with its Strategic Plan and espoused by the COG Board of Directors, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

If you would like additional information on COG's 2011 Legislative Priorities or have general questions, please contact Nicole Hange, COG's Policy Coordinator at 202.962.3231 or nhange@mwcog.org

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