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*Adjunct member

Memorandum

DATE: September 8, 2010
TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Mary Hynes, Member, Arlington County Board
SUBJECT: Recommendations Regarding COG's Aviation Policy Program

Recommendation Summary

I am writing to recommend Board adoption of R51-10, which provides the framework for COG's ongoing aviation policy program. These recommendations are based upon the past year of experience described below, and reflect the changed conditions of recent years that were summarized in my memorandum to the Board of July 8, 2009.

R51-10 recommends the following:

- COG maintain an aviation policy program under the oversight of the COG Board of Directors. The program should be funded at the current FY 2011 budget level.
- The Board should establish an elected official position of "Aviation Policy Liaison," and an alternate, to coordinate with COG staff in advising the Board on Aviation Policy issues, as well as coordinating with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), and other COG committees with an interest in aviation policy.
- The Aviation Policy Liaison would report at least annually to the Board, and more frequently should conditions warrant.
- COG should host a forum on helicopter noise on September 22, 2010.
- COG should work with MWAA, the region's congressional delegation, and affected local communities regarding a process for re-examination of the slot and high-density rules at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.
- COG should maintain its long-standing membership in the National Association for a Sound Controlled Environment (NOISE) and participate in its annual legislative workshop.
- COG should develop, in cooperation with the MWAA, a website that would serve as an information repository of best practices for community impacts of aviation and aircraft noise. The site should have links with other organizations including the MWAA noise monitoring system site, FAA, Washington Airports Task Force, and the NOISE.

Background

At its July 8th, 2009 meeting, the COG Board adopted Resolution R40-09 which recommended enhancements to the Aviation Policy Program. These are summarized as follows:

- COG's Aviation Policy Committee should be discontinued effective January 1, 2010. Aviation policy matters would be advanced to the COG Board, acting as a "Committee of the Whole" on an as needed basis.
- Two or three regional community forums on aviation policy should be planned and implemented during FY 2010.
- COG's website should be upgraded, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), to provide a source of ongoing information on aviation policy issues.
- Aviation policy program funding should be set at one-half the funding level provided during FY 2009.
- The FY 2010 experience should be evaluated and an assessment provided to the Board along with recommendations for the future of COG's aviation policy program.

The rationale for these recommendations was based on the need to strike a balance between maintaining an appropriate regional presence on aviation issues, while recognizing changed conditions in recent years, as well as the challenging budget period in which we are all operating.

Activities During FY 2010

Pursuant to COG Resolution R40-09, two regional aviation policy forums were held between January and June, 2010. A third forum on helicopter noise impacts that could not be scheduled during this time period is now being planned for September 22, 2010.

The following is a summary of the two forums held in FY 2010:

Forum #1: Aviation and Economic Impacts - January 21, 2010

On January 21, 2010, COG hosted a forum on aviation and economic impacts. The purpose of the forum was to gain a greater understanding of the economic impact of aviation on our region, as well as the impact of aviation on communities; and to gain greater understanding of airport operations and impact on regional and local economies. It was hoped that the forum would lead to identification and prioritization of possible policy issues that support and strengthen both aviation and regional economic and sustainability strategies.

Attendance at Forum #1 was approximately 65 people, including 6 elected officials. Headline speakers included Jim Bennett, (former) General Manager of MWAA, and Steven Fuller, George Mason University Director of the Center for Regional Analysis. Other speakers included Carmine Gallo, FAA Regional Administrator, Eastern Region, John Heimlich, Vice President and Chief Economist, Air Transport Association, and Leo Schefer, Executive Director, Washington

Airports Task Force.

Key information provided and outcomes from Forum #1 included:

- As the region moves forward, air transportation must be a key ingredient in metropolitan Washington's economy in the coming decades. Regional planning needs to include access to our airports as a critical component.
- A significant increase in the number of international passengers using Dulles International Airport was noted. The Washington Airports Task Force reported that nearly 20 percent of adults in the region visit Europe once every three years and 13 percent of the region's jobs are related to international trade.
- Economic growth is driven by transportation hubs, such as airports. Increased national and international economic competition is making hubs like Reagan Washington National and Dulles International more important than ever. The future of metropolitan areas is tied to the type of air service they can support, which helps determine which industries they attract.
- The region should consider a regionally-focused development plan, with development around airports, especially transportation/transit access from all directions, being a critical element. The Metropolitan Development Committee and potentially the Transportation Planning Board may wish to consider this recommendation further.

Forum #2: Aviation Policy Forum - March 15, 2010

The National Organization to Insure a Sound-controlled Environment (N.O.I.S.E.), America's oldest community-based aviation noise organization, in cooperation with COG, hosted a joint "Aviation Policy Forum" in Washington, DC. The event was held in conjunction with the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference March 15, 2010. COG is a founding member of N.O.I.S.E. and has participated for many years in its annual conference and other policy events.

The forum was intentionally scheduled to coincide with the NLC's annual policy conference, where each year thousands of local elected officials from across the country come together to discuss local government policy. The "Congressional City Conference" is designed to provide information about federal priorities affecting cities and towns and initiate NLC's grassroots advocacy work with Congress and the Administration. This forum also provided an opportunity for those airport representatives and elected officials to identify federal legislative priorities for sustainable airports.

Attendance at Forum # 2 was approximately 30 people, including 20 elected officials. Headline speakers included Lynne Pickard, Deputy Director, FAA Office of Environment and Energy and Steve Vecchi, Director of Sound Insulation, THC, Inc. Other elected official speakers included Ambrose Clay, College Park, Georgia, Mary Rose Evans, City of Parkway Village, Kentucky, Alicia Hughes, City of Alexandria, and Mary Hynes, Arlington County.

Key topics discussed at Forum #2 included:

- Support for passage of legislation that as a requirement for eligibility for federal funding of runway expansion or construction, an airport operator must obtain approval of the proposed project from an *Airport Planning Organization*. The majority membership of such an organization would consist of representatives of communities affected by the noise and other environmental consequences generated by air traffic at the airport.
- Support for full funding for the federal Airport Improvement Program.
- Support for the injection additional AIP Funding in the Economy
- Support to develop a new jet “green engine” within ten years that is thirty to forty decibels quieter than current jet engine levels.

Over the past several years NOISE meetings and conferences have begun to evolve. This past NOISE winter meeting represented a shift towards an agenda and meeting content that focused on grassroots and community involvement. NOISE conference planners have indicated that feedback from participants was extremely positive and they were pleased with the local focus. This meeting gave COG a chance to be highlighted on the national scene and share our strategies and history with aviation noise and emissions abatement. A continuing presence at this annual meeting has the potential to give COG an opportunity to continue to elevate their legislative platform as it pertains to these and other aviation issues. Future meetings will also give opportunity to learn from others, reevaluate our current strategies and reshape our legislative agenda in response to changing political and policy climates.

Conclusions Regarding Forums and Recommendations Regarding COG's Aviation Policy Program

Although both forums held in FY 2010 were deemed a success in terms of the information that was gathered, the level of participation by local elected officials was limited, and overall attendance was somewhat lower than had been expected. This outcome is consistent with recent experience that led the COG Board to discontinue the Aviation Policy Committee and return oversight for regional aviation policy to the Board. While there may be value in hosting future forums from time to time, it does not appear that scheduling forums on a regular basis as part of COG's aviation policy work program is warranted. Proceeding with the forum on helicopter noise on September 22nd is appropriate and would complete the forum series originally planned for FY 2010.

Going forward, COG should maintain an aviation policy program, funded at a modest level, with policy oversight by the Board of Directors. To facilitate the program, it is recommended that the Board appoint an elected official "Aviation Policy Liaison" (and an alternate) that would work with staff to advise the Board on aviation policy issues as well as coordinate with MWAA. The Liaison would report annually or more frequently if warranted to the Board, and would also coordinate with other COG policy committees on aviation policy matters. In addition, it is recommended that COG upgrade its website, in cooperation with MWAA, to provide an ongoing source of information on aviation issues including aircraft noise. Continued participation in N.O.I.S.E., including its annual policy forum, is also recommended.

One potentially significant ongoing policy issue that has already arisen as an element of the FAA Reauthorization legislation is the slot and perimeter rules for Ronald Reagan National Airport. These two rules limit the number of flights per hour using Reagan National, and limit the number of non-stop flights over 1,250 miles. While COG has held to a long-standing position in opposition to any changes to these rules, economic realities, as well as dramatic improvements in the aircraft fleet and flight path management technology suggest that a reconsideration of these rules would be appropriate. If such a reconsideration is advanced, it should be done in very close collaboration with MCAA, as well as the local congressional delegation, along with coordination with the communities most affected by aviation at Reagan National.

These recommendations are formalized in R51-10 for consideration by the Board on September 8, 2010.