

APPLICATION ABSTRACT

With support from the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program, the National Capital Region will launch an implementation program to create thriving and resilient communities in the region's transit corridors. *Region Forward*, the region's adopted vision plan for guiding growth and development, emphasizes transit-oriented communities as a main strategy for achieving equitable and sustainable development in the region. In the coming decade, a second generation of transit – major investments in heavy rail, light-rail, streetcar, and bus rapid transit, as well as capital improvements to the existing network – will test our ability to address social disparities and grow sustainably. These investments, totaling \$14 billion, will touch every jurisdiction in the region, providing a unique opportunity to align local, state, and federal resources with new transit infrastructure to create compact, healthy neighborhoods that provide access to jobs, services, and opportunities to residents most in need.

A RESILIENT ECONOMY: The recent economic recession showed us that transit-oriented communities with specific attributes such as good urban form, jobs, affordable housing, density, and retail options were more resilient than communities located far from transit, jobs, and services. Property values in transit-oriented communities have held their value better than other locations. Residents in these communities are more likely to walk, bike, or use transit to get to work and meet their daily needs, making them less reliant on driving and less vulnerable to higher gasoline prices, and households typically have lower combined housing and transportation costs, leaving more income available for other essential needs. These communities can also enhance equity by providing greater access to jobs, educational opportunities, and amenities for lower-income residents.

A RESILIENT ENVIRONMENT: Development patterns and population growth over the past decades have greatly increased the consumption of open space, the amount of impervious surface, and stormwater pollution, which in conjunction with other major pollution sources threaten one of the country's largest and most significant watersheds, the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These patterns have also increased consumption of energy and water, and the region's greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. To protect the Chesapeake Bay and other vital natural resources, we must accommodate future growth through transit-oriented, mixed-use, low impact development in existing urban communities. These communities, when properly designed, use existing infrastructure, energy, and water more efficiently than their sprawling counterparts, and have lower per capita vehicle miles traveled.

Transit-oriented communities are enhancing our quality of life as a region and are rapidly becoming part of a new American Dream. The National Capital Region has a strong model for what makes communities resilient and a regional plan aligned with this model. We have a responsibility to accelerate its broader implementation in **all** parts of our region to enhance prosperity for **all** of our communities.

The National Capital Region will launch *Equity Through Transit*, an implementation program to replicate the components that make some communities so resilient – a good mix of affordable housing, jobs, and services, urban form, and density – in the region's transit corridors. This approach will advance Region Forward's vision for sustainable growth around transit, while supporting the next-generation investments in new transit and capital improvements. *Equity Through Transit* will have the following outcomes for the National Capital Region:

- Sustainable development supported by a new generation of transit investments
- More affordable housing around transit, and better access to jobs, housing, and services for disadvantaged residents
- A better jobs-housing balance, leading to reduced household housing and transportation costs

- Development patterns that protect the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, conserve water and energy resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Greater ability for vulnerable businesses and under-resourced local governments to weather economic adversity due to lower transportation costs
- Broader and deeper public involvement in regional planning, particularly among traditionally underrepresented groups
- Increased coordination among government stakeholders in regional decision-making, and better alignment of local, state, and federal investments

To achieve these outcomes, it is critical that local governments and key stakeholders have the resources, tools, and capacity to advance implementation of *Region Forward* locally, and that we identify new policies and programs to support implementation regionally. Accordingly, ***Equity Through Transit*** will:

- Task 1** - Strengthen **public engagement and capacity building** by convening a Regional Equity and Engagement Team to lead public engagement activities at each stage of the program, build capacity among traditionally disadvantaged communities to participate in regional planning, and shape equitable outcomes.
- Task 2** - Conduct **research and performance analysis** to evaluate existing conditions, fill gaps in Region Forward, and measure future progress.
- Task 3** - Develop a **Strategic Transit-Oriented Development Investment Plan** to guide the type, scale, and timing of physical and human capital investments for transit station areas region-wide to provide a template for creating resilient, transit-oriented communities.
- Task 4** - Launch **place-based demonstration plans** around new and underutilized transit stations to address how diverse community types can achieve regional sustainability and equity goals in tandem with new transit investments.
- Task 5** - Create **TOD implementation toolkits** to equip local jurisdictions with resources, models, and strategies for implementing investments appropriate to diverse community types.
- Task 6** - Identify and implement regional and local **policy, program, and institutional changes** that can provide ongoing support for coordinated housing, transportation, and environmental planning and investment.

Project Name	<i>Equity Through Transit</i>
Lead Applicant	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Point of Contact	David Robertson (202) 962-3260 drobertson@mwkog.org
Population Level	Population 4,985,282 (Large Region)
Category of Application	Category 2: Detailed Execution Plans and Programs
Total Budget	\$17,601,062
Participating Jurisdictions	District of Columbia, Frederick County MD, Montgomery County MD, Prince George’s County MD, City of Bowie MD, City of College Park MD, City of Frederick MD, City of Gaithersburg MD, City of Greenbelt MD, City of Rockville MD, City of Takoma Park MD, Town of Bladensburg MD, Saint Charles Urbanized Area MD, Arlington County VA, Fairfax County VA, Loudoun County VA, Prince William County VA, City of Alexandria VA, City of Fairfax VA, City of Falls Church VA, City of Manassas VA, City of Manassas Park VA
Regional Geography	National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Congressional Districts Covered	MD 4,5,6,8; VA 8,10,11; DC Del