

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors

Proposed Policy Focus and Priorities – 2008

COG BOARD OF DIRECTORS LEADERSHIP – 2008

Chairman Michael Knapp, Montgomery County Council

Vice Chairman Penelope Gross, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Vice Chairman Kwame Brown, Council of the District of Columbia

BACKGROUND

COG's Vision: The members of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) envision the National Capital Region as the best place to live, work, play and learn.

COG's Mission: COG fosters regionalism – by promoting regional partnerships, developing best practices, applying cutting-edge technologies, and providing a forum for discussion and decision-making. The COG Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing COG's mission and implementing its work program and activities.

The most challenging issues facing the metropolitan Washington region require a long-term vision and commitment to action. As a voluntary association of local governments, COG educates area policy officials as to the regional challenges and identifies and encourages the implementation of solutions built around consensus. While COG has an impressive record of achievement using this approach, solutions are not often easily reached and rarely can be completed in the one-year term of office for its policy boards and committees.

Beginning in 2004, the COG Board of Directors committed to a **multi-year policy focus on growth and development**. The foundation for this policy focus is COG's adopted Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies centered on growth issues. This focus does not preclude COG's leadership and involvement on a wide-range of policies and programs; rather, it is intended to help provide a framework for potentially disconnected actions and better organize COG's ongoing and new work. This focus also complements and leverages the priorities and activities of COG's two independent policy boards, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

Goal: Promote balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities.

Strategies: Identify and disseminate best management principles, practices, and policies for sustainable growth and livable communities; establish regional consensus on principles, practices and policies for sustainable growth and livable communities; and facilitate dialogue among competing stakeholders.

The adopted policy focus embraces partnerships with organizations and stakeholders with varied perspectives on this issue. The policy focus also acknowledges that there is no "one size fits all" approach to balanced, sustainable growth, and that COG's efforts in this area will address the needs of core, inner suburban and outer suburban jurisdictions. However, COG believes that sharing information, challenging past assumptions, and educating public officials on best practices and new growth and development tools holds great promise for the balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities we seek.

A. POLICY FOCUS AND PRIORITIES – NEW ACTIVITIES IN 2008

1. Regional Housing Continuum

Almost since its inception, affordable housing has been a policy focus for COG. At COG's December 2006 annual membership meeting, former HUD Secretary Cisneros challenged COG members to re-examine their regional and local housing policies to address a seven-point housing continuum, ranging from shelters and

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors

Proposed Policy Focus and Priorities – 2008

transitional housing for the homeless to move-up and long-term homeownership. Affordable housing is closely linked to overall regional growth and development policies and the absence of affordable housing near regional employment centers exacerbates transportation congestion. COG's renewed attention to housing in 2008 comes at a critical time as declining housing value and a sharp increase in mortgage foreclosures presents new challenges.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to adopt regional housing production and preservation targets and to sponsor a regional public-private policy conference to shape strategies for addressing ongoing and new housing challenges, as well as examine the impact of mortgage foreclosures. The Board will also be asked to approve housing as a focus for its discussion and examination throughout 2008 through special speakers and other information at monthly Board meetings.

2. Greater Washington 2050

The COG Board of Directors approved the Greater Washington 2050 initiative in December 2007. Greater Washington 2050 builds on extensive discussion over the past two years concerning the scope and impact of COG's regional planning activities and ways to improve outcomes and regional quality of life. Greater Washington 2050 has the potential to expand the time horizon for regional planning, the scope of area jurisdictions involved, to engage new partners, and strengthen the impact and effectiveness of regional planning tools and products. This effort is an ambitious, 12 to 18 month program.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to provide continued policy guidance, working with the newly established Greater Washington 2050 Coalition and the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee, as well as identify funding to support this effort through the Board's budget process. The Board will be regularly engaged in GW 2050 products and activities, for example, announcing the results of the proposed Greater Washington 2050 regional survey.

3. Climate Change

The COG Board of Directors approved a major regional project focused on climate change in 2007 and charged the newly established Climate Change Steering Committee with developing policy and program recommendations for action by the Board in April 2008. This effort will also build the Regional Energy Strategic Plan adopted by the Board in 2006 and ongoing planning work underway through COG's TPB and MWAQC.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to adopt a comprehensive regional climate change action agenda in mid-2008 and subsequently consider committee re-structuring to fully integrate climate change as an ongoing element of COG's work. The action agenda is expected to address regional greenhouse gas targets as well as public-sector best practices.

4. Regional Emergency Coordination Plan

The COG Board of Directors adopted the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan in late 2002, just one year following the terrorist attacks in New York City and the Pentagon. The RECP and the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination Systems (RICCS) have been important regional planning and communications used by area local, state and federal officials and other partners and stakeholders. The CAOs Committee and state-level Senior Policy Group are currently examining governance restructuring for regional planning and coordination.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to secure support from the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council and key COG policy and technical committees to update the RECP, in

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors

Proposed Policy Focus and Priorities – 2008

conjunction with the anticipated update of local government operations plan. The CAOs Committee will also advise the COG Board concerning the impact of proposed governance changes.

5. Workforce Preparation and Competitiveness

COG's Strategic Plan speaks to economic development and competitiveness and also educational opportunities for children and adults; however, its policy structure and programs have limited focus on education and workforce training. Other regional organizations exist to address specific segments or elements of education and workforce training. Also, historically COG has been an organization of general purpose local governments and has not included elected or appointed school board officials or school administrators. The region's continued economic vitality will require continued focus on education and workforce training, especially in light of aging and special needs populations.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to convene representatives from area community colleges and workforce organizations, such as Workforce Organizations for Regional Collaboration (WORC) and area Workforce Investment Boards to examine current workforce preparation and competitiveness issues in the National Capital Region and identify opportunities for improved collaboration and new program priorities.

B. POLICY FOCUS AND PRIORITIES – CONTINUING IN 2008

1. Metro Dedicated Funding

COG, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council jointly established a "blue ribbon panel" in late 2004 to examine the need for dedicated funding for Metro. The panel released its report in January 2005 calling for a regional approach to dedicated funding for Metro, which was subsequently endorsed by the COG Board of Directors and the TPB. The District of Columbia, State of Maryland and Commonwealth of Virginia have each taken steps to implement Metro dedicated funding; Congressional action is pending.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to assess continued local, state and WMATA support for pending federal Metro dedicated funding legislation in early 2008 to work to secure passage of Metro dedicated funding legislation in 2008.

2. BRAC

In 2005 COG and TPB staff analyzed the likely impacts of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission recommendations for the Washington region. In addition to the base-specific BRAC recommendations, DoD also recommended not renewing leases for many buildings in the region that do not meet the Department's anti-terrorism standards for design and security. The findings from the COG / TPB analysis were provided to COG member local governments as well as the BRAC Commission to assist with their deliberations on the BRAC actions. Since that action, COG technical committees and the TPB have been incorporating BRAC land use and transportation actions into ongoing regional land development, transportation and air quality plans.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to approve convening a joint regional land use, transportation and air quality planning to provide a comprehensive assessment of BRAC actions to date, regional and local impacts, and pending issues.

3. Census 2010

COG and its member local governments have a great need for accurate and timely data published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in conjunction with the decennial census and other surveys. COG is a co-state data

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors

Proposed Policy Focus and Priorities – 2008

center for U.S. Census information and products. COG and its member local governments were very involved in preparation for Census 2000 and as a result, secured higher rates of Census participation compared with previous Census years.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to approve a regional Complete Count Committee or similar panel to oversee Census 2010 efforts in the National Capital Region. This effort will be linked to ongoing issues concerning the impact of new residents to the Washington area, assimilation and service requirements. COG will seek to partner with other organizations with information and expertise, such as the Brookings Institution.

4. Green Building

Following a major regional conference sponsored by COG on green building technology in September 2006, the Board of Directors adopted a comprehensive green building report and recommendations, largely focused on public-sector and commercial buildings. The report urged that area local governments support the regional recommendations and take action to implement, especially as it relates to new construction and renovation of city and county buildings. The report only made very preliminary findings addressing residential and school construction.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to launch an aggressive outreach program to present the report's findings and recommendations to area city and county boards and councils and to initiate the next phase of work centered on residential and school construction, and retro-fit of existing buildings. The Board will also be asked to engage the Greater Washington Board of Trade and other private sector organizations to explore measures to monitor and encourage implementation of recommendations focused on commercial construction and renovation. Green building efforts will be integrated with COG's climate change and Greater Washington 2050 initiatives.

5. Anacostia Restoration

The Anacostia River is one of the most polluted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. COG's interest in restoring the Anacostia reflects the river's broader impact on the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. In 2006 COG created a new governance structure to guide the restoration of the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland. A public-private Steering Committee was established to coordinate restoration initiatives staffed by a program director contracted through COG, along with COG staff. A Leadership Council consisting of the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Governor of Maryland, the County Executives of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, the EPA Regional Administrator and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District Engineer provides broad policy oversight for the effort. A central focus of the effort during 2008 is agreement on an "Action Agenda" to guide the restoration effort. Major work is also ongoing to prepare of a comprehensive restoration plan for the watershed led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and supported by COG.

ACTION: The Board will be briefed on the Anacostia Restoration Program, progress in water quality and habitat protection, and funding needs to advance the restoration program. The Board will have an opportunity to advocate on behalf of federal funding for the partnership; such funding was recently authorized as part of the Water Resources Development Act, but now requires a federal appropriation to advance. Obtaining federal funding is seen as crucial for meeting Anacostia restoration and Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Board of Directors

Proposed Policy Focus and Priorities – 2008

B. MEMBERSHIP FOCUS AND PRIORITIES – NEW ACTIVITIES IN 2008

1. Regional “Thought Leaders” Dialogue

COG is a diverse association of more than 250 local, state and federal elected officials representing 21 local governments in the National Capital Region. Despite this diverse membership, most direct engagement is currently targeted to city and county elected and appointed officials, frequently through their participation in one or more of COG’s policy boards and committees. In 2007 and 2008, COG continued to refine and expand its outreach targeted to state legislators and the region’s congressional delegation.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to convene a small number of locally-hosted regional thought leaders dialogue meetings in 2008. The purpose of the meetings will be to more broadly engage public, private and civic leaders (including those not actively involved with COG) on regional issues currently addressed by COG and those that might be addressed by COG in the future.

C. ADMINISTRATIVE FOCUS AND PRIORITIES – NEW ACTIVITIES IN 2008

1. Strengthening COG’s Effectiveness

COG is a dynamic organization that must periodically re-examine its structure and practices to strengthen its effectiveness and ensure that it has structure and tools to achieve its mission.

ACTION: The Board will be asked to provide guidance to the executive director, senior staff and COG committees, as appropriate, to examine the following issues in 2008:

- **COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS:** Evaluate policy committee and technical committee reorganization to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness, ensure that committees understand and embrace their mission and roles, and that work program activities result in more measurable outcomes and products. This work will commence in the first half of 2007 and be reviewed as part of COG’s July 2008 retreat for action in September and implementation not later than January 2009.
- **BOARD EFFECTIVENESS:** Include a module on board development and board-staff partnership as part of the COG July 2008 retreat targeted at COG Board, TPB and MWAQC leadership and members with the goal of strengthening the effectiveness of policy official leadership and participation in COG.
- **MEMBER AND PARTNER ORGANIZATION RECOGNITION:** Evaluate revamping and expanding COG’s awards program held in conjunction with its annual membership meeting in December.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:** Board guidance and adoption of COG staff development and succession plan, continuity of operations plan, communications and outreach plan, and “Green COG” plan (to ensure that COG adopts energy-saving and environmentally-sensitive business practices).