

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Supporting the region's transportation funding, housing, water quality, climate and energy innovation, air quality, human services, emergency preparedness, infrastructure investment and local government input across all sectors

January 2020



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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ABOUT COG

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

CREDITS

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TRANSPORTATION FUNDING, PLANNING, AND CONNECTIVITY

Support Reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Funding Bill While Fixing the Deficit in the Federal Transportation Trust Fund (TTF)

The current authorization for federal transportation spending—the FAST Act— is set to expire in 2020. The region strongly supports Congress reauthorizing this Bill with funding levels for all programs for the next six years. For several years, there has been a gap between the TTF's revenue funding the Bill and expenditure needs – these shortfalls have been closed in the FAST Act with short-term measures. The FAST Act only provides funding through 2020 and covers those shortfalls through short-term measures. This structural deficit to enhance the TTF revenues and provide certainty of federal funding for transportation infrastructure has to be treated as a top priority.

Support Additional, Reliable, and Recurring Federal Transportation Infrastructure Funding

The National Capital Region's transportation infrastructure serves not just the region, but also the nation's federal government and its international partners. The funding needed to maintain the National Capital Region's transit, railroad, and highway infrastructure in a state of good repair is chronically underfunded and must be enhanced. Recurring and reliable funding to maintain and enhance operations on all federal facilities is a priority.

Support Federal Funding for the Region's Metrorail System

The federal government should act to provide its share of operating and capital funding for the Metrorail system that its employees and the region depend on. Specifically, support the reauthorization of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) beyond FY2019 to fund the federal government's annual appropriations for Metro's capital improvement budget at or greater than \$150 million a year. The Metrorail system is the centerpiece of the metropolitan Washington region's transportation system and supports the backbone of its economy. Almost half of all federal employees use the Metrorail and bus system to commute to work.

Support Funding for Next Generation Transportation Systems

The need for a more efficient and safer means of transportation is imperative to help achieve the nation's energy, efficiency, and environmental quality goals. The private sector has made significant investments to advance the use of vehicles using alternative modes of energy, and technology assisted vehicle operations. Public sector investments are needed to prepare transportation infrastructure to be able to utilize and support the new technology to build the next generation of transportation systems where travel is more efficient and safe.

Support Traffic Incident Management Improvements

Support state and federal policy changes to improve regional traffic incident management by updating regional agreements to increase the consistency of traffic incident management laws. Specifically, support legal and policy changes to designate transportation incident responders as emergency responders, allowing the use of flashing lights and sirens to get to incident scenes across state lines more quickly. Encourage federal, state, and local governments to negotiate an agreement for funding and deployment of roadway service patrols on federal parkways and other critical major roads not currently benefiting from such patrols.

Support the Visualize 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan

Advance efforts to implement projects, programs, and policies that promote the aspirational initiatives endorsed by the region's Transportation Planning Board as part of Visualize 2045: Bring jobs and housing closer together; Expand bus rapid transit and transit ways; Move more people on Metrorail; Provide more telecommuting and other options for telecommuting; Expand express highway network; Improve walk and bike access to transit; and Complete the National Capital Trail. Support actions at the state and federal level to fund projects and programs and support enactment of policies that help advance the potential improvements of these initiatives.

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Support Investments in Water Infrastructure

Support sustained and expanded funding for state and federal water quality programs, including the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) funding, state revolving funds (SRFs), stormwater local assistance funds, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. Ensure that local water infrastructure investments to meet water quality permit load allocations and handle future population and economic growth are protected. Invest in workforce training and development to ensure the availability of skilled workers to fill water sector jobs.

Support Climate and Flood Resiliency Initiatives

Support funding to address robust climate change analysis, adaptation and resiliency planning, flood control and management, drought management, and development and coordinated implementation of local best practices.

Ensure Stormwater Regulatory Feasibility

Support actions that provide for a feasible pace for future MS4 stormwater permits and reasonable reporting requirements.

Ensure Local Government Input

Ensure that local governments and wastewater and drinking water utilities are given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on legislation and management decisions affecting the Chesapeake Bay and local water quality.

Support Affordability and Regulatory Flexibility

Support cost-effective scheduling and financing of water quality programs, including streamlining permits, flexibility to achieve nutrient and sediment reduction across wastewater, stormwater, and other sectors, affordability of water, and full funding for agricultural conservation programs.

Support Water Supply Security

Support water quality security and resiliency through research, planning, and programs and drinking water source protection policies and programs to ensure a resilient, reliable and clean drinking water supply for the region.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY INNOVATION & AIR QUALITY PROTECTION

Support Deployment of Clean Energy Innovation and Technology

Encourage and support investment in energy-sector innovation across sectors to increase energy efficiency and transition to clean energy sources. Support and protect regulatory and policy frameworks that foster new partnerships to effectively implement clean energy solutions. Enable business model innovation and encourage and expand the adoption of energy efficiency and clean, distributed energy generation technologies and infrastructure, and support for low and zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure.

Enhance Energy Security and Resilience

Prioritize and protect funding for energy-sector infrastructure to improve resilience and reliability. Support policies and funding for energy improvements such as energy efficiency, cyber security, microgrids, district energy systems, and storage technology, especially when coupled with clean energy generation. Support community-based efforts and public-private partnerships to improve climate and energy resilience at the local level.

Support Policies to Meet the Region's Climate Goals

Expand funding and legislation at federal, state, and local levels to help meet the region's medium- and long-term climate change goals. Ensure that local governments are recognized and given opportunities to provide timely and meaningful input on climate and clean energy programs.

Expand Clean Energy Finance

Expand options for and improve access to clean energy finance at the state and local levels. Foster cost effective and efficient market frameworks and reasonable regulatory frameworks that support clean energy investment across all sectors and enhance investment certainty. Establish and enable key partnerships, institutions, agencies, plans, and programs to support sustainable clean energy incentives and lower the cost of doing business in the clean energy sector.

Support Policies that Preserve and Protect Regional Air Quality and Public Health

Support strong policies, regulations, and funding necessary to preserve improvements in air quality and strengthen the region's ability to meet current and future air quality standards that are protective of public health and welfare. Expand efforts to increase and speed adoption of low-emitting technology solutions.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Support Efforts to Conduct a Fair and Accurate Census in 2020

Allocate funds at the federal and state level to adequately support local governments in developing census communication and mobilization plans to conduct a complete and accurate count of our region with increased outreach to hard-to-count populations. Encourage the U.S. Census Bureau to pursue policies that will produce a fair and accurate population count in a timely manner.

Support Efforts to Increase the Supply of Housing and Promote Housing Affordability

Support legislation and programs to preserve and increase the supply of housing and housing choices to address the full spectrum of needs in our region. Ensure that a sufficient supply of housing is preserved and created that provides a diverse range of housing units, including size and price point that is affordable for our region's residents.

Support Efforts to End the Experience of Homelessness

Work with federal, state, and local Continuums of Care throughout the region to ensure that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring through implementation of a "Housing First" approach. Increasing the supply of supportive housing provides opportunities for wrap-around services that promote housing stability and independent living. Voice the need for additional HUD funding for Housing Choice Vouchers to prevent and end the experience of homelessness.

Support Alignment of Workforce Development and Job Creation

Support federal legislation to focus on workforce development and job creation at the local level, and efforts to develop industry standard credentialing and skills programs for sectors experiencing job growth in the region. Support legislation and programs that fund local job development, career and technical education, and overall more closely align education and job creation.

Support Local Governments and Activity Centers

Work with local governments to support sound land use planning which focuses on employer retention and new job growth in the region's mixed-use Activity Centers.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Support Efforts to Combat Substance Use Disorders

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase resources to combat substance use disorders, including opioids, throughout the region which may include: improving access to treatment and recovery services, promoting prevention education, reducing the stigma of drug disorders, supporting research on pain management, and ensuring awareness of overdose-reversing drugs.

Increase Availability of and Access to Mental Health Services

Work with local, state, and federal partners to increase access to and availability of mental health services throughout the region to include psychiatric hospital beds, counseling and other outpatient services; continued expansion of crisis intervention, mental health courts, and diversion programs, where treatment is indicated rather than incarceration; and re-entry programs to reduce recidivism rates of mental health consumers.

Protect Healthy Food Access and the Region's Farm and Food Economy

With the 2018 reauthorization of the Farm Bill and uncertainty about when the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization Act may be taken up again, support protecting, fully funding, and improving access to programs within these bills including the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program, and the National School Lunch Program that serve vulnerable low-income individuals and families in the region. Support strengthening programs that advance regional food systems development, on-farm conservation and connections between farmers and consumers of all income levels.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Support Regional Emergency Preparedness

Continue to support emergency response preparedness programs that advance and improve response preparedness to existing and emerging threats. Work with local and state partners to maximize the region's share of federal grant funds and use these funds to promote value added outcomes that continue to increase capacity, capability, and developed standards for regional response in the National Capital Region.

Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Funding

The National Capital Region (NCR) receives UASI funding for efforts to address the multi-discipline planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and to assist in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism using the whole community approach. As funding allocations are assessed, policy makers should recognize the complexity of challenges in the NCR that directly impact Federal government operations and security and support an increase in UASI funding to our region to effectively address the unique nexus of U.S. Federal, state, local, and international operations.

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