

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
777 N. Capitol Street N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 12, 2008

To: COG Board of Director

From: David Robertson, Executive Director

Subject: COG State Policy Platform

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Background

During its annual retreat in July, COG members discussed the need to enhance legislative and policy priorities through greater coordination with state and congressional elected officials to strengthen and elevate our strategic plan for the region.

Engagement and active participation of our locally elected officials has long been a strength of this organization. Similar involvement by our state and federal officials has been more of a challenge. As a member association of nearly 300 local, state and federal elected officials, it is imperative that COG have active involvement at all levels of government. One third of our membership consists of state elected officials. As COG looks to planning for 2050 and the issues of sustainability, affordable housing, and connecting transportation and land use decisions, it is necessary that we involve all of our members- including state officials- to shape the region's future.

Capacity Building

Last year, COG established a committee comprised of government relations staff from member jurisdictions to help ensure that COG's state and federal policy agenda is coordinated with area governments. This group has proven tremendously useful as we hone our policy agenda and develop legislative outreach strategies. COG staff has also provided the Board, and other committees, with legislative reports highlighting legislation that has been introduced with potential implications for this region and has taken its message to each of our states governing bodies. While occasionally successful, much of what COG has done, to date, has been reactive in nature. The development of a Regional policy platform is recommended to fill this void and better position COG as a leader in the National Capital Region.

### Recommendation

Staff recommends a fairly broad policy platform this year recognizing that the Board may want to take formal positions on specific legislation once bills have been filed in the Maryland and Virginia State Legislatures and the District of Columbia Council. The chosen policy areas conform with COG's strategic plan, the policy and program priorities for 2009 as identified at that annual retreat, and with the Work Program and Budget. Additionally, staff has reviewed the legislative platforms of the state associations of our member governments for consistency.

### Outreach

Upon approval and adoption of the Regional policy platform, staff will work to prepare the document for external use, specifically for distribution during early 2009 state outreach events. Planning is underway for an event at both the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies. In the past, the Executive Director has presented COG's priorities, activities, and accomplishments to the District of Columbia Council. A similar presentation, along with a report of COG's 2009 Work Program and Budget, will be given this year however; staff is reviewing opportunities for greater engagement of both the Council and Mayor.

Staff is also developing additional strategies to keep our state officials engaged throughout the year, including a quarterly newsletter that would highlight the work of this organization.