

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Phil Mendelson, Chairman
Judith “J” Davis, Vice Chairman
Jay Fisette, Vice Chairman**

**Overview of Adopted 2004 Policy Focus
*Revised March 10, 2004***

Background

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is a world class organization that promotes regional partnerships, develops best practices, and applies cutting edge technologies to ensure that the metropolitan Washington region is the best place to live, work, play and learn. As the organization of Washington area local governments, COG’s mission is to enhance the quality of life and competitive advantages of the metropolitan Washington region in the global economy by providing a forum for consensus building and policy-making; implementing intergovernmental policies, plans and programs; and supporting the regional as an expert information resource. The COG Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing COG’s mission and implementing its work program and activities.

Policy Theme

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 does not have the authority to compel action by its members or their local governments. Rather, COG must first educate area policy officials as to the regional challenges and identify and encourage the implementation of solutions built around consensus. While COG has an impressive record of achievement using this approach, solutions are not easily reached and rarely completed in the one-year term of office of the COG Chairman.

Chairman Mendelson, in partnership with Vice Chairmen Davis and Fisette, will take a three-year approach to COG’s policy focus. The foundation for this policy focus will be COG’s adopted Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies centered on growth issues:

Goal: Promote balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities.

Strategies: Identify and disseminate best management principles, practices, and policies for sustainable growth and livable communities; facilitate dialogue among competing stakeholders using focus groups, issues forums, and other techniques; and establish regional consensus on principles of sustainable growth and livable communities.

A strengthened COG policy focus on the adopted Strategic Plan goal and strategies acknowledges that growth issues are integrated with and cut across many regional policy issues that are often addressed from a “stovepipe” perspective and would have collateral benefits in transportation, air and water quality, affordable housing, pedestrian safety, and certainly quality of life and the overall economic competitiveness of the metropolitan Washington region.

The proposed policy focus will also seek partnerships with organizations and stakeholders with varied perspectives on this issue. The proposed policy focus will also acknowledge 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, the COG Board leadership 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.

Measurable Outcomes

Beginning in 2004, the COG Board will begin a three year effort to address growth and development issues in the metropolitan Washington region.

The COG Board Chairman will recommend, as a policy goal for 2004, that COG partner with the Washington District Council of the Urban Land Institute, and other stakeholders such as the Greater Washington Board of Trade, National Association of Home Builders, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Coalition for Smarter Growth, to co-sponsor a program titled, *Reality Check on Growth*. Reality Check is a one-day participatory GIS-based exercise, similar to one held in the Los Angeles region involving the Southern California Association of Governments and other stakeholders. The COG Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC) was briefed on this proposed initiative and supported an ongoing COG role.

Reality Check is expected to involve nearly 300 regional political, business, development, community, and environmental leaders, and builds on more than ten years of work by COG, including the Partnership for Regional Excellence, the Transportation Vision, the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee sponsored Regional Dialogue Series, the Regional Activity Centers Maps, and the Smart Growth CD and Mobility and Accessibility Study projects currently underway. Reality Check will invite stakeholders to collaboratively analyze and develop alternative growth scenarios for the metropolitan Washington region.

The objective of Reality Check is to gain attention, further understanding, and galvanize local action to deal with the impact of current growth patterns and trends in the metropolitan Washington region. Reality Check is tentatively scheduled for early 2005.

In addition to the proposed Reality Check program, the COG Board Chairman will propose that COG identify and conduct targeted policy initiatives that support the multi-year policy focus. Three initiatives proposed for 2004 include policy conferences or other work program activities addressing: 1) pedestrian safety and mobility; 2) the siting and design of federal facilities; and 3) neighborhood and historic preservation.

Strengthening Policy Integration

The COG Board has established a policy advisory committee structure, as well as benefits from the work of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), which consistent with a long-standing agreement serves as the transportation policy advisor to the COG Board of Directors, and which brings tremendous strength to the organization and its membership:

- Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee
- Committee on Noise Abatement and Aviation at National and Dulles Airports
- Human Services Policy Committee
- Metropolitan Development Policy Committee
- Public Safety Policy Committee

In the context of this focus on growth and development, the COG Board Chairman will propose to invite the leadership of each of the policy advisory committees to the Board. It is hoped that these presentations will stimulate a more substantive policy dialogue among Board members.

Board Development

The COG Board Chairman will propose that COG continue several activities designed to strengthen the Board of Directors:

- October 13, 2004 adoption of revised Strategic Plan
- March 27 Board of Directors networking reception
- July 23-25 2004 COG retreat
- December 8, 2004 Annual meeting and membership luncheon, featuring policy focus speaker and policy focus recap/recommitment

Board Action

Chairman Mendelson outlined the proposed policy focus to the COG Board at its February 11, 2004 meeting and invited additional Board comments and suggestions, and directed COG staff to prepare a revised policy focus overview with additional deliverables.

Policy Focus Tasks and Deliverables - Internal

Smart Growth Begins at Local Level

This multi-media (video CD-ROM and companion Website) project was proposed by the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC), and builds upon the MDPC's successful "Planning Dialogue Series" of local government presentations on planning and land use. "Smart Growth Begins at Local Level" is a tool to educate residents, local officials and other community stakeholders about the importance of employing Smart Growth techniques in making wise land use decisions. The video will be disseminated on CDs to the identified groups and will also be available for viewing on the COG website.

Schedule: COG Board will review the video at the March 10 COG Board meeting and solicit additional comments on usage and implementation prior to a recommendation to approve the video at the April 14 COG Board meeting.

TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study

In 2001, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) directed TPB staff to undertake a Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. The purpose of the Study was to evaluate the land use, transportation and air quality impacts of several linked alternative transportation and land use growth scenarios by comparing several “measures of effectiveness” or “MOEs”. In October 2003, TPB staff presented background information on the project to the Board and how results of the study could influence regional growth and transportation planning. Staff will again brief the Board when initial study results become available this Summer.

Schedule: Presentation to the COG Board on the TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study initial study results in July 2004.

COG Green Infrastructure Project

COG’s “Green Infrastructure Demonstration Project” is a partnership between COG and the National Park Service that mapped the region’s existing parks, forests, streams and rivers using satellite imagery. As requested by the Board, staff will work with the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee, Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC) and Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) to develop uses for the “Green Infrastructure” information, including detailed analysis of the undeveloped land in the region. In addition, COG will co-sponsor a “Green Infrastructure” conference with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the National Park Service (NPS) and the Casey Trees Endowment.

Schedule: Working with COG policy and technical committees, staff will determine potential uses for COG’s “Green Infrastructure” GIS database. Potential examples include quantifying the location and composition (forest, open fields, etc.) of undeveloped land or assisting with efforts to preserve planned open space in the region. COG proposes to sponsor a “Green Infrastructure” conference in October 2004.

Proposed “Quality of Life” Growth Assessment

As discussed at the Human Services Policy Committee, decisions in the areas of land use, zoning, growth, and the environment should begin to include discussions of quality of life, social environment impact, and workforce issues. COG staff will explore federal and foundation funding options to address these and related issues and present to the HSPC for review and possible future Board action.

Schedule: COG staff research on funding opportunities and presentation to HSPC by June 2004.

Pedestrian Safety and Mobility

Pedestrian mobility and accessibility can be enhanced by strengthening attention to these considerations throughout the planning and development process. The Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee and the TPB Technical Advisory Committee will be asked to

jointly review previous COG analysis and study on this topic and to compile an inventory of best practices for TPB and COG Board review.

Schedule: COG Board recommendation to TPB to request TPB Technical Committee participation in joint study; draft report in October 2004.

Neighborhood and Community Development and Preservation

While growth and development issues are often focused on undeveloped land in the region's outer jurisdictions, many currently developed communities would benefit from in-fill and opportunities for greater community and economic revitalization. The Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee and the Housing Directors Technical Advisory Committee will be asked to jointly review previous COG analysis and study on this topic and to compile an inventory of best practices for MDPC and COG Board review. In addition, the Washington Area Housing Partnership will be asked to partner in this effort.

Schedule: Draft report in July 2004.

Policy Focus Tasks and Deliverables - External

Reality Check on Growth

During the February COG Board meeting, the Washington District Council of the Urban Land Institute briefed the Board on plans for "Reality Check on Growth" – a planned one-day participatory GIS-based exercise event similar to those recently completed in Los Angeles (with ULI Los Angeles and the Southern California Association of Governments) and in Utah. Nearly 300 regional political, business, development, community, and environmental leaders will be invited to collaboratively analyze and develop alternative growth scenarios for our metropolitan Washington. Staff has established an interdepartmental team to ensure effective participation in the event by COG staff and local elected officials and government staffs. The Board will be asked to appoint one or more policy officials to represent COG on the Reality Check advisory and planning committees.

Schedule: Appoint COG representative(s) in April; update Board in July and November; promote active regional participation at January 2005 "Reality Check" event.

Proposed COG/NCPC Conference on Federal Facilities Planning

In January 2001, COG and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) jointly sponsored a one-day conference entitled "Federal Planning, Urban Revitalization and Smart Growth in the National Capital Region". Building upon the success of that event, COG staff proposes a one-day workshop / conference focusing on the land use and transportation impacts of federal facility locations in metropolitan Washington.

Schedule: NCPC presentation to COG Board on May 12; appoint joint representatives to joint CO-NCPC conference planning committee; co-sponsor conference in September 2004.

Proposed Joint COG Board / Baltimore Metropolitan Council Board Meeting

In 1994, COG Board and Baltimore Metropolitan Council Board members met in Prince George's County to discuss issues of common concern such as growth, transportation and public safety and the environment. Since that date, COG and BMC staffs have met periodically to coordinate planning and technical efforts. The COG Board will be asked to co-sponsor a joint COG-BMC meeting.

Schedule: Review draft joint meeting purpose and outline April 2004; proposed Joint Meeting of COG and Baltimore Metropolitan Council in June 2004.

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Board of Directors
Policy Focus Calendar – 2004

January	February	March	April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of Board Chair and Vice Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of 2004 policy focus • MDPC – growth and planning • CBPC – ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPB – Transportation funding shortfall • CBPC – ongoing • Smart Growth Video - review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSPC – public safety • Smart Growth Video – action • Review CO-BMC meeting purpose and outline
May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MWAQC – summer Ozone • NCPC briefing and appointment of COG-NCPC conference planning committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSPC – health and human services, growth and development related issues • Joint COG-BMC meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality Check update • TPB – Initial Scenarios Study Findings • HSPC/WAHP – housing and neigh. Revitalization best practices • July Board retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO BOARD MEETING
September	October	November	December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONAANDA – airport noise/part 150 study findings • COG-NCPC conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed “Green Infrastructure” conference • Pedestrian safety and mobility best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality Check update and review of proposed program and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COG annual meeting and special policy focus speaker

Policy Focus Presentations/Actions in Red
Policy Committee Presentations to the COG Board in Blue
Policy Focus Special Meetings and Events in Green

Updated: 3/10/04