

2023 Annual Report

Connecting Leaders, Empowering Change



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

Messages from the COG Board Chair and Executive Director



I've had the privilege to participate at the Council of Governments in many roles, so it's an honor for me to now serve as Chair of the COG Board of Directors. While our challenges as a region can change and evolve, one thing remains constant: COG is the one place that brings leaders from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia together to focus on solutions. In my view, I've been grateful many

times that a body like COG exists to think about things beyond a line on a map and with an eye to the future.

Regionalism isn't always easy—and coordinating to build consensus and set us on a path to mutual success is a significant, but worthwhile undertaking. As the area's elected leaders, we need to nurture relationships with our colleagues across state and jurisdictional lines, to build partnerships beyond our immediate communities, and lean into difficult conversations so that we can all gain a deeper understanding of our shared strengths, opportunities, and challenges. When we do so, we also find we are all facing the same challenges, requiring a solution we are all invested in.

The work done through COG stretches into every neighborhood across all metropolitan Washington. I am proud to join my colleagues and community partners as we advance our priorities to support a thriving, sustainable, and equitable region.

Charles Allen

2024 COG Board Chair



As I reflect on my first year as COG's Executive Director, I'm proud of the progress made on our region's biggest priorities in 2023. In the coming year, we will continue to collaborate to secure Metro's long-term financial sustainability

after helping bring the region together to find solutions to the transit system's short-term FY 2025 budget deficit. We will continue to prioritize housing, following up on our work to complete the first Regional Fair Housing Plan in a generation, and now beginning implementation of strategies to ensure housing equity. Our work on environmental initiatives is also gaining momentum. Recent planning to expand electric vehicle (EV) use and transition our electrical grid to clean energy are moving us on the path toward achieving our overarching climate goal for 2030.

There is truly no place like COG to get this work done. Our team of subject matter experts, combined with the unwavering support from our area jurisdictions and the dedication of our region's leaders, propel us forward. Thank you for your partnership in these efforts.

Clark Mercer

COG Executive Director

Rallying Regional Action on Metro

Beginning with the Annual Leadership Retreat in July 2023, COG has been convening area officials to help address the major deficit Metro is facing for the system's Fiscal Year 2025 budget and beyond due to federal transit relief expiring, costs rising with inflation, and shifts in commuting patterns since COVID. COG's Chief Administrative Officers Committee Workgroup analyzed WMATA's cost structure and focused on forging consensus around a path forward, proposing eight near-term recommendations including urging WMATA's funding partners to increase their subsidies to the transit system and calling on Metro to increase revenues and cut costs further. In addition, COG is urging an even more comprehensive examination of the system's funding models and governance to ensure the system's long-term health.

COG Workgroup Recommendations on Metro



WMATA ACTIONS

- Reduce administrative costs
- Increase fares, improve participation of Metro Lift, and decrease fare evasion
- Limit the transfer of capital preventive maintenance funds to operating costs
- Limit service reductions



LOCAL & STATE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

- Re-set WMATA's subsidy to provide increased local/state contributions
- Keep the operating cost increase cap in place



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

- Increase in-office participation by the federal government
- Increase federal contributions to WMATA

Featured Programs & Initiatives



Cooperative Forecasts

COG released the Round 10 Cooperative Forecasts, the first major update to regional growth forecasts since COVID, which project the region will add 1.5 million people and 1 million jobs by 2050.

Street Smart

COG's bi-annual Street Smart campaigns provided safety tips to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists through a combination of transit ads, media outreach, digital engagement, video testimonials, and on-the-ground outreach.

Congressional Delegation Reception

COG leaders convened on the Hill alongside the region's four U.S. senators—Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen from Maryland, Tim Kaine and Mark Warner from Virginia—to discuss priorities like the Chesapeake Bay, clean energy, and Metro.

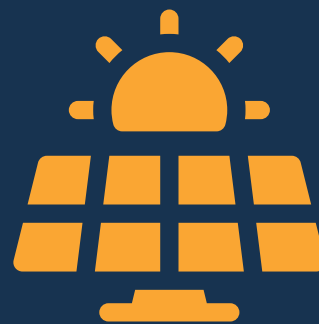
Combating Climate Change

Officials on the COG Board pursued priority strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the region's climate goals. Through the Electric Vehicle (EV) Deployment Clearinghouse, COG provided area jurisdictions with a suite of resources to support increased adoption of EVs and related infrastructure.




The COG Board also unified around new solar energy goals for 2030 and directed staff to work with partners to accelerate the deployment of solar installations regionwide.

In addition, in partnership with the Department of Defense, COG released the *Military Installation Resilience Review Report*, which identifies hazards and vulnerabilities in communities surrounding four military installations in the District of Columbia and outlines actions to address these vulnerabilities.

To learn more about COG's climate initiatives: mwcog.org/climate



Regional Solar Energy Goals

-  250,000 solar rooftops in the region by 2030
-  Solar installations on government facilities in all jurisdictions
-  Explore renewable energy for 100% of government operations



Battery Campaign

COG's Go Recycle public education campaign shared information on fire risks associated with lithium-ion batteries in the solid waste and recycling collection process.

Leadership Seminar

The Public Safety Leadership Seminar brought together homeland security and public safety professionals from over two dozen area agencies to further equip leaders with skills and strategies for regional collaboration.

Equitable Development Workshop

COG convened 80 local government racial equity officers, planning directors, and housing department directors to develop regional guiding principles that advance racial equity through new policies and implementation of jurisdictions' comprehensive plans.

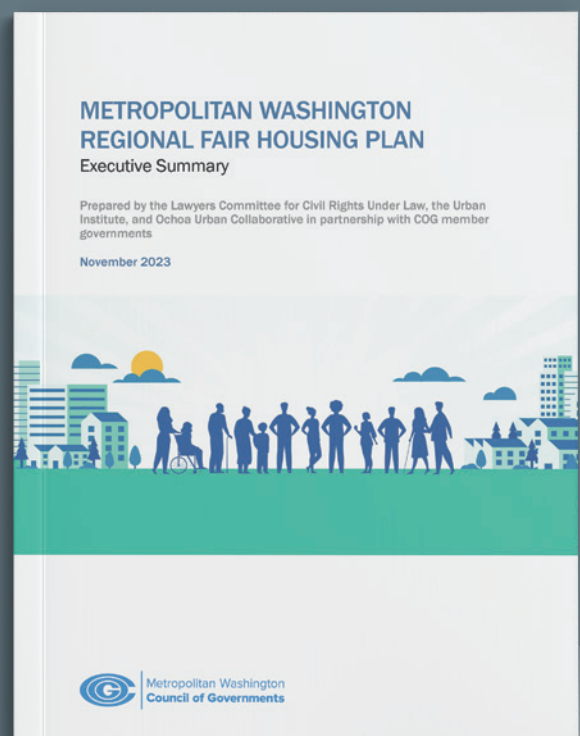
Advancing Housing Goals

COG supported several multi-faceted efforts to address housing equity and affordability. In partnership with eight local jurisdictions, COG released the *Metropolitan Washington Regional Fair Housing Plan*, the first such plan for the region in a generation. The plan uses a data-informed approach to develop strategies that prevent housing discrimination while addressing the root causes of housing inequity.

COG's data collection and analysis efforts also played a vital role in understanding homelessness in the region, with the annual *Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington Report* detailing demographic trends among our region's unsheltered residents.

COG's housing initiatives were bolstered by a second round of COG's Housing Affordability Planning Program, financed by the Amazon Housing Equity Fund and totaling \$500,000 in grant assistance for local governments and non-profit housing developers engaged in the planning, approval, or development of housing near transit stations.

To learn more about COG's housing initiatives: mwcog.org/housing





Bike to Work Day

Co-organized by COG's Commuter Connections program and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), the 22nd annual Bike to Work Day attracted thousands of participants as the region celebrated bicycling as a green, low-cost commute option.

Air Quality Alerts

When the region experienced poor air quality prompted by Canadian wildfires, COG quickly disseminated information to the public through social media and news outlets, resulting in record visits to the COG website and engagement on social media.

Foster Parents of the Year

COG celebrated the 20th Annual Foster Parents of the Year Awards, recognizing outstanding foster parents across 10 jurisdictions for their dedication and support of youth in need.

Providing Transportation Grants & Assistance

The Transportation Planning Board at COG helps advance regional priorities by providing funding for planning and design of local transportation projects as well as selecting projects to receive federal funding for specialized transportation and highway alternatives.



REGIONAL ROADWAY SAFETY PROGRAM \$550K

The TPB approved \$550,000 in technical assistance for eight local planning projects that work to improve roadway safety across the region.



TRANSPORTATION LAND-USE CONNECTIONS \$755K

The TPB provided funding assistance totaling \$755,000 for 10 local planning projects that promote walkable, mixed-use communities and support a variety of transportation options.



TRANSIT WITHIN REACH \$250K

The TPB approved \$250,000 in technical assistance to three local planning projects that enhance access to transit stations.



ENHANCED MOBILITY \$10.2M

The TPB approved \$10.2 million for 23 transportation services projects that support mobility for older adults and individuals with disabilities across the region.



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES SET-ASIDE PROGRAM \$3.2M

The TPB approved approximately \$3.2 million in federal TA Set-Aside Program funding for six non-highway transportation projects in Maryland.

2023 COG Leadership

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Prince William County

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Reuben B. Collins, II
Charles County

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George Barker

COG STAFF

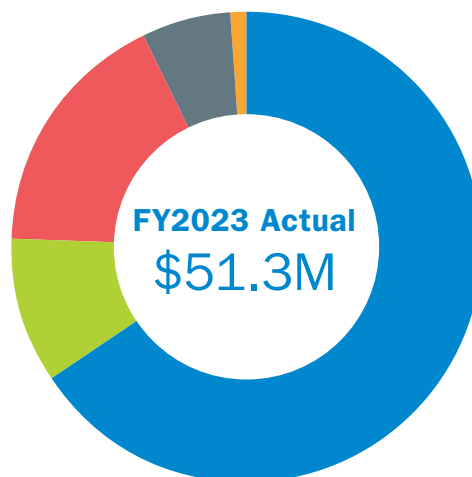
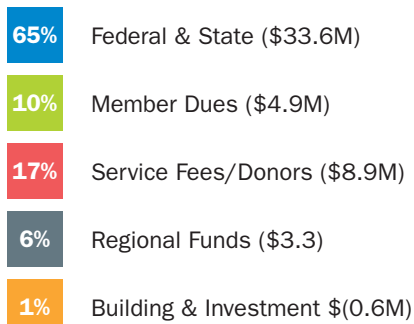
Executive Director
Clark Mercer

About the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)

COG is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders from the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia together to address regional issues and plan for the future. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

COG Budget Revenues by Source



Includes subrecipient pass-thru revenue

Front cover: COG members tour Union Station in the District of Columbia.

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