



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Chuck Bean, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Housing Affordability Planning Program
DATE: October 6, 2021

In October, the COG Board of Directors will consider endorsing High-Capacity Transit Station Areas (HCTs) and Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) as key planning concepts and tools to inform regional and local decision making and action. These actions will help the region work toward building transit-oriented communities, which in turn will help manage future growth and achieve multiple regional goals, including those related to housing, transportation, and climate change.

At the same meeting, the COG Board will then have an opportunity to put these planning concepts immediately to work by authorizing a new COG Housing Affordability Planning Program (HAPP). This grant program will award a total of \$500,000 to area local governments and non-profit developers for projects and studies that contribute to and support preservation and creation of housing near high-capacity transit and accessible to those with lower incomes.

COG has extensive experience overseeing successful programs that provide technical assistance for local projects across the region, including the Transit Within Reach Program, Transportation Land Use Connections program, and Regional Roadway Safety Program.

You will find more details about HAPP in attachments that follow; I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you at the upcoming meeting. By creating inclusive, transit-oriented communities alongside strategic partners, the region will work toward sustainable prosperity for all.

ATTACHMENTS

- Proposed Housing Affordability Planning Program Description



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PLANNING PROGRAM

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and its member governments are shaping a better region, and have adopted shared goals on housing, transportation, and climate. Building transit-oriented communities with increased housing availability for lower income households is an integral part of realizing these shared goals. This strategy has the potential to address inequities in access to transportation, education, and economic opportunity, all while reducing emissions, among many other co-benefits. COG's Housing Affordability Planning Program (HAPP) will advance this vision.

HAPP GRANTS

HAPP will award **small, flexible grants of up to \$75,000** to area local governments and non-profit developers (applying in coordination with a local jurisdiction) engaged in the planning, approval, or development of housing around transit stations. COG will award a total of \$500,000 in grant funding.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS & CRITERIA

Grants will assist with a variety of housing pre-development, project implementation activities, or housing policy studies that have the potential to create greater housing opportunities near transit that is accessible to those with lower incomes.

Potential grant applications could include support for the following:

- Market studies to assess the feasibility of increasing the term of a proposed affordability covenant for a development near transit;
- Financial feasibility analysis to increase total units or deepen affordability targets for a proposed project near transit;
- Concept plan drawings to support an application for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits or community meetings; or
- Assessment of zoning changes or incentives to allow for increased affordability or density near transit areas.

Projects must help advance the COG Board's vision for the region by increasing housing near High-Capacity Transit (HCTs) and increasing the amount of housing units affordable to low- and middle-income households. Special consideration will be given to projects in proximity to an Equity Emphasis Area (EEAs) or Activity Center.

NEXT STEPS

Following COG Board endorsement, COG will finalize program details then initiate a solicitation process. An expert advisory panel and COG staff will review application submissions and recommend projects to the COG Board of Directors for approval. Successful applicants will enter into a formal agreement with COG; the project timeline would not exceed 12 months.

CONTACT:

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**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE
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RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE CREATION OF A HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PLANNING PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) comprises the region's 24 local governments and their governing officials, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and COG provides a focus for action on issues of regional concern; and

WHEREAS, area jurisdictions have a shared vision, *Region Forward*, for a more prosperous, accessible, livable, and sustainable future which has guided the region's evolution over the past two decades into a national leader in transit-oriented development; and

WHEREAS, the COG Board has articulated building transit-oriented communities as a multi-sectoral planning priority to achieve multiple regional goals; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the COG Board adopted regional housing targets, critical to creating these transit-oriented communities, stating that at least 320,000 new housing units should be added in the region by 2030, with at least 75 percent built in Activity Centers or near High-Capacity Transit Station Areas (HCTs), and 75 percent accessible to low- to middle-income households; and

WHEREAS, increasing housing availability for lower income households has the potential to address inequities in access to transportation, education, and economic opportunity, all while reducing emissions, among many other co-benefits; and

WHEREAS, creating a Housing Affordability Planning Program (HAPP), administered by COG, will advance these goals by awarding small, flexible grants of up to \$75,000 to area local governments and non-profit developers (applying in coordination with a local jurisdiction) engaged in the planning, approval, or development of housing around transit stations; and

WHEREAS, HAPP will expend a total of \$500,000 to assist with a variety of housing pre-development, project implementation activities, or housing policy studies that have the potential to create greater housing opportunities near transit that is accessible to those with lower incomes; and

WHEREAS, projects will advance the COG Board's vision for the region by increasing housing near High-Capacity Transit (HCTs) and increasing the amount of housing units affordable to lower income households. Special consideration will be given to projects in proximity to an Equity Emphasis Area (EEAs) or Activity Center.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:

The COG Board authorizes the creation of a COG Housing Affordability Planning Program (HAPP) and authorizes the Executive Director, or his designee, to receive and expend grant funding in the amount of \$500,000 from Amazon's Housing Equity Fund and initiate a solicitation process to distribute the funding in HAPP grants of up to \$75,000.