



GreaterWashington2050

February 21, 2008 Meeting Summary

Welcome / Introductions

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair and Greater Washington 2050 Chair Sharon Bulova welcomed Coalition members to the first meeting and introduced Michael Knapp – 2008 Chair of the COG Board of Directors and President of the Montgomery County Council. Greater Washington 2050 Coalition Members introduced themselves and discussed their interest in participating in the initiative. They described the background and expertise they brought to the process. Chair Bulova noted this was the beginning of an important step in guiding the region's future and the group was building on much discussion and the successes of many others in the past 50 years of the region.

Historical Foundation for Greater Washington 2050

David Robertson, COG Executive Director, presented a PowerPoint which outlined the steps that led to the formation of the Greater Washington Coalition. Mr. Robertson stated that Greater Washington 2050 had its roots in many prior programs and efforts within COG – such as the Cooperative Forecasting Program; the Partnership for Regional Excellence; the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Vision; the ULI Reality Check on Growth event; and the Greater Washington Board of Trade 2006 Potomac Conference. He thanked participants for their time and effort.

Greater Washington 2050 – What Do We Want to Accomplish?

Chair Bulova presented the Greater Washington 2050 Work Program as approved by the COG Board of Directors. Gerrit Knaap, Director of the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland facilitated a discussion, described below, of the Work Program.

1. What do we want the Washington region to look like in 50 years?

Meeting participants described their vision for the Washington region, including land-use patterns characterized by targeted, dense development close to transit hubs, quality housing near jobs and transportation centers, a plethora of transportation choices that go beyond gasoline powered automobiles (e.g. intercity rail), and a high quality of life in both the east and west that met the needs of families as well as the next generation of urban youth. Coalition members spoke about their hope the Washington region would create new sources of financial prosperity not dependent upon the federal government – including becoming a world leader in energy efficiency and carbon neutral technologies. Preserving natural assets, repairing degraded ecosystems and fostering local recreational opportunities, were also cited as high priorities. Coalition members indicated that new organizational structures might be needed to accomplish these goals, including better relationships with adjacent jurisdictions and a new way of assessing progress and evaluating opportunities. While participants acknowledged the

difficulty of predicting technological advances that might occur, they affirmed the need to consider the preferences and lifestyles of the next generation (e.g. youth) and claimed it would be wise to begin to put alternatives in place now.

2. What are the best opportunities for this initiative?

Participants cited many events and opportunities which could facilitate the success of this initiative. These included:

- *The unique aspects of Washington which create a competitive advantage. This includes our role as a national tourist center, our excellent Metro system – which is the first/only transit system many Americans experience, our walkability, accessibility, large number of green buildings, intellectual capacity, universities and well-schooled workforce, and our role as a federal “petri-dish.” Different parts of region offer different advantages (e.g. we don’t all need to be exactly alike). The presence of the federal government provides us the opportunity to harness federal purchasing power to help shift the economy and catalyze the development of new (e.g. green) businesses.*
- *Current interest in climate change and energy. Framing issues in terms of greenhouse gas reduction and high energy/oil prices will speak to high public interest in these areas. Participants expressed interest in overhauling local building codes – which already has begun.*
- *New Administration – which will provide us many opportunities to move forward certain issues – and re-examine some other decisions, including future BRAC type issues.*
- *Transportation bill reauthorization – will offer many opportunities*
- *Technological advances – hard to predict but offers opportunities to region*
- *Freight rail tracks that run through region*
- *Growth in seniors*
- *Possibility of hosting Olympics in future.*
- *Availability of non conventional partners – partnerships important*

3. What would a successful GW2050 Initiative look like?

Coalition members indicated that a successful initiative would create a regional compact on growth that influenced local land-use decisions. Changes in land-use plans would begin to resolve concerns about housing/job imbalances and other growth problems, and create nodes of development around transit stations. The public would better understand the value of dense, transit oriented development – and be more accepting of ‘smart growth’ land-use patterns. A successful GW 2050 initiative would help to ignite an energy efficient economy in the Washington area, and our tax codes and practices would better support our overall goals. Overall, we would have an improved growth story to tell, with data to support aspirations and goals.

4. Will our current work plan enable us to meet our goals?

Comments included:

- *Communication strategy needs to happen right away – need to involve citizens*
- *Need clearer vision/focus*
- *The work plan should help us identify the (next) “one” thing the region can get behind*
- *The survey tool described may not be the right tool for us. Need a way to engage and galvanize the public.*
- *Need to reach out to the younger generation – where they are – as they will be the beneficiaries.*
- *Need help from constituents (public) to think/plan long- term*

- *We may need one physical on-the-ground plan*
- *Need clearer definitions of terms, strategies*
- *Need quantifiable goals/measures (e.g. carbon foot print)*
- *Need to find a way for economic/financial tools to reward our goals*
- *Can we call our compact what it is: “a sustainability compact”?*

Lunch and Guest Speaker

Amy Liu of the Brookings Institution presented *“Unleashing the Potential of a Metropolitan Nation”* – a description of Brookings’ new “Blueprint for American Prosperity.” Ms. Liu noted the need to educate decision makers on metropolitan areas as centers of growth, to catalyze adoption of key federal reforms, and to empower networks of regional businesses, political entities, and civic leaders. Ms. Liu also stated the need to leverage assets at home in the U.S. and described the challenges to retaining U.S. world leadership. China and India are responsible for about 40% of recent growth in world output, coupled with the significant U.S. loss of manufacturing jobs from the 1970s. Ms. Liu stated that we have high value jobs, and low value service jobs - - and not that much in between. Ms. Liu also stated that by 2030, 51 million baby boomers will retire and that the majority of U.S. workforce will be nonwhite. The Top 100 metropolitan regions contain only 12% of U.S. land area, but 65% of population, and 75% of GDP. The Washington region’s economy is ½ of the combined economies of the District of Columbia and the states of Maryland and Virginia. In addition, the majority of poor and working poor now live in suburbs, leading to issues of transportation, immigration. Multi-jurisdictional or multi-state solutions are often not rewarded according to how things are currently structured and there is a need for integrated problem solving.

Proposed regional public opinion survey

Mr. Robertson discussed the proposed element for a regional survey and asked for volunteers to participate in a work group to help with the survey design. Several Coalition members reiterated the idea that the “survey” must accompany a communications / outreach element that would mobilize and engage. Other Coalition members discussed the challenges of how to reach out to younger adults – the future leaders of the region and also said a survey could provide a chance to give individuals concrete suggestions for action they could take

Next Steps

Chair Bulova discussed the proposed meeting schedule and agenda topics for the next few months, noting that the next meeting was for Friday, March 28, in the COG Board Room.