

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Draft

Mr. David J. Robertson
Executive Director
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Robertson:

In your letter of October 20, 2009, you requested comments from the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on the draft report “REGION FORWARD – Greater Washington 2050: COG’s Vision for the National Capital Region in the Twenty – First Century,” approved for public release and comment by the COG Board of Directors on October 14th. The TPB appreciates the opportunity to receive a briefing and provide comments on this report.

The TPB greatly appreciates the time and effort devoted by the Greater Washington 2050 Coalition Membership to developing a new, comprehensive regional vision for the Washington region, and pledges its support for future efforts to advance the shared regional goals that have been identified. The TPB particularly appreciates the effort to integrate goals from the nine individual sectors, including transportation, into the four broad categories of accessibility, sustainability, prosperity and livability. In addition to recognizing the critical linkages between such sectors as land use, transportation, and housing, the focus on these four categories, and on sustainability and livability in particular, lays the groundwork for the Washington region to take advantage of new legislative and budgeting initiatives at the federal level, such as the new partnership on sustainable communities formed earlier this year between the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The TPB has become particularly aware of the importance of these linkages through several years of experience in pursuing the goals of the 1998 TPB Vision through its Transportation and Land Use Connections (TLC) program.

With respect to the six specific questions that you asked be considered in commenting on the draft report and recommendations, the TPB offers the following observations:

- While the nine individual sectoral goals seem appropriate and reasonable, greater emphasis might be placed on the linkages between these goals by giving relatively more prominence to the four overarching categories of accessibility, sustainability, prosperity and livability.
- A recent international scan of experience with the use of “targets and indicators” in the transportation sector suggests a focus on: a few, well -defined and understandable indicators (quality rather than quantity); trends and priorities rather than hard numerical targets; incentives rather than disincentives; and expanded benefit cost analysis that can capture a full array of benefits and costs associated with alternative policies. The TPB recognizes that this experience may not necessarily be applicable to other sectors addressed in the report.
- A baseline analysis on targets and indicators should be conducted and updated regularly, as is currently being done for example for greenhouse gas emissions.
- The survey of public opinion conducted under the Greater Washington 2050 effort provided some new statistically significant information at both jurisdictional and regional levels on public perceptions of regional priorities and performance. Repeating this survey every three years or so would provide an excellent means of tracking progress on regional priorities as seen by the general public.
- Continued outreach to local governments and other public and private organizations on the results of this work and continued efforts would help promote and inform, and ongoing public dialogue on key regional policy issues and concerns.
- Greater accountability and transparency in the process can best be provided by public updates of the public opinion survey and other indicators of regional performance. Data currently being collected through ongoing programs at COG (such as the TPB’s triennial freeway congestion survey) and state and local governments provides an existing resource which could be tapped at relatively low cost for this purpose.

Thank you again for providing a briefing to the TPB on the Greater Washington 2050 report, and for the opportunity to provide comments.

The TPB looks forward to participating in future efforts to advance the shared regional goals identified in the report.

Sincerely,

Charles Jenkins
Chairman
National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

October 20, 2009

District of Columbia

Bladensburg*

Bowie

College Park

Frederick

Frederick County

Gaithersburg

Greenbelt

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County

*Adjunct member

Honorable Charles Jenkins
Chairman
Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council
of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairman Jenkins:

How can public officials and leaders in business, civic and environmental stakeholder organizations shape the future of the National Capital Region? Thirty-four area leaders examined that question for the past year and a half.

Their response is *REGION FORWARD – Greater Washington 2050: COG's Vision for the National Capital Region in the Twenty-First Century*.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), which has supported this work by the Greater Washington 2050 Coalition, is asking for your input. The COG Board of Directors voted unanimously on October 14 to approve *REGION FORWARD* for public release and comment.

Comments are requested in writing or online by November 30, 2009. All comments will be examined by the Greater Washington 2050 Coalition in December prior to final action by the COG Board in January. In commenting on the draft report and recommendations, please consider:

- Are these the right nine goals and can you suggest any broad, overarching goals that are equally critical to our region's vitality and future?
- Will the proposed targets and indicators help track progress in meeting goals? Are other regions using more precise targets and indicators to evaluate if their communities are making progress on these tough, inter-jurisdictional issues?
- Should COG conduct a baseline analysis on targets and indicators in early 2010 and periodically thereafter publish update reports to track progress?
- Should COG survey the public on these and related issues to see if the communities we serve believe progress on targets is actually improving the quality of life in the National Capital Region?
- Should COG couple this work with more outreach and training for local governments to promote best practices and new tools that will help achieve goals?
- How can COG and its partner stakeholders provide greater accountability and transparency in this process in the future?

There are two ways to comment by November 30, 2009. Also, please contact Steve Kania at COG if you would like someone from COG and the Coalition to make a presentation on the *REGION FORWARD* report. Mr. Kania may be reached at 202-962-3249 or skania@mwkog.org.

1. Review the draft *REGION FORWARD* report, which is available online at www.greaterwashington2050.org. The website also has a link to the comments page.
2. COG welcomes written comments or suggestions to: 2050 Comments, MWCOG, 777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002.

Thank you for your continued regional leadership and for your participation in this important public outreach phase of the Coalition's work. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-962-3260 or drobotson@mwkog.org if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



David J. Robertson
Executive Director