



MEMORANDUM

TO: COG Board of Directors
FROM: Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director
SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report – November 2026
DATE: October 28, 2026

POLICY BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) – In October, the TPB reviewed updated project concepts and commitments for the I-495 Southside Express Lanes. In November, the board will consider undertaking a new air quality conformity analysis including the project, a key step before voting to add the Express Lanes to the Visualize 2050 plan. The TPB also approved updated performance targets for regional travel time reliability and reviewed draft highway asset targets for pavement and bridge conditions.



OUTREACH & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

6th Annual Regional Homeless Forum – COG and Kaiser Permanente co-hosted the 6th annual Regional Homeless Forum, uniting government and community partners. COG Board Vice Chair and District of Columbia Councilmember Charles Allen joined attendees to discuss collaborative solutions promoting dignity and health, focusing on housing supply, medical respite care, and federal policy changes.

HR Conference – COG recently hosted the Reignite HR conference, gathering regional HR professionals to share resources and practical workplace strategies. Attendees explored reengaging with purpose, sustaining culture, modernizing performance

Clean Air Achievement: Region Meets Federal Ozone Standard

In a historic milestone, the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) at COG announced at its October meeting that the region has met the 2015 federal ozone standard and is requesting official EPA certification. The region now meets all current federal air pollution standards, recording just five unhealthy air days in 2026, down from 51 two decades ago.

[Read a highlight, download the redesignation request, and view the 2026 ozone summary](#)

management, and integrating AI tools. The event fostered a collaborative, people-centered approach to workforce development.

Regional Transportation Conference – COG's Commuter Connections program recently hosted the Association for Commuter Transportation's (ACT) Chesapeake Chapter mini-conference. The event featured transportation demand management (TDM) workshops focusing on vanpools, e-bikes, accessibility, and marketing. Attendees also engaged in interactive Q&A sessions to discuss strategies and share best practices for enhancing regional mobility.



TPB Regional Travel Survey – The Transportation Planning Board launched a fall promotional wave for the Regional Travel Survey, running through December. Randomly selected households will receive mailed invitations to participate. Board members are encouraged to use the RTS ambassador toolkit to verify the survey's legitimacy and boost participation.

[Learn more about the survey](#)

FARM Committee Hosts Largest Annual Tour In October, the Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Policy Committee hosted its largest annual tour to date in Prince George's County. More than 60 participants explored the local agricultural economy by visiting family farms, an urban incubator, and a production facility to highlight the vital connection between agriculture, public health, and economic development.

[View photos and highlights](#)

COG 101 – COG Executive Director Clark Mercer presented to the Leadership Center of Arlington about COG programs and benefits to member jurisdictions and the region.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Clean Air Achievement – COG's announcement that the region is meeting federal ozone standards was covered by Capital Weather and WAMU.

[Capital Weather](#)

I-495 Southside Express Lanes– The TPB heard a presentation from VDOT's Nick Donohue on the I-495 Southside proposal, which was covered by WTOP, Alexandria Brief and FFXnow.

[FFXnow](#)

Potomac Hydrofoil Ferry Study – The COG Board discussion on a study on the feasibility of a Potomac hydrofoil ferry was covered by 7 News, Axios, Alexandria Brief, and Patch.

[7News](#)