



Focus on Action



Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
2004 Annual Report



A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is a regional organization comprised of 19 local governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. Policies are set by the full membership acting through its Board of Directors, which meets monthly to discuss area issues.

COG provides a focus for action and develops sound regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, human services, population growth, public safety, and transportation.

Founded in 1957, COG is an independent, nonprofit association. It is supported by financial contributions from its participating local governments, federal and state grants and contracts, and donations from foundations and the private sector.

Message from the Board Chair



In recent years, member jurisdictions of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) have faced new challenges and responsibilities associated with preparing for major emergencies, managing economic growth and protecting the natural environment.

COG's role as the region's planning organization has become even more cutting-edge as a result.

It seemed fitting, therefore, for us to take a good, hard look at the vision and mission of this world-class organization. So in 2004, COG's Board of Directors devised a revamped Strategic Plan. The plan clearly defines our goals for ensuring that COG remains the premier forum to identify, discuss, and resolve regional issues to enhance the quality of life in the National Capital Region.

The successes that inspired COG's Strategic Plan are as varied as they are forward-thinking. Building on its reputation as a world-class, high-performance organization, COG organized the nation's first Low Impact Development Conference, drawing guests from as far away as New Zealand and California. Later, the Board approved creation of a special Metro Funding Panel to research alternative methods of financial support for the region's public transit system as it faced a looming budget shortfall. Homeland security planning progressed throughout the year as the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council put in place new communications equipment and procedures and new, detailed plans for handling transportation and public health needs.

It is with great pleasure that I begin my role as Chair for an organization that continues to build upon past successes and strengthen regional bonds. I look forward to working with COG, its partners and stakeholder groups as we continue to work even more effectively in 2005.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith F. Davis".

Judith F. Davis

2005 Chair, Board of Directors



Vision

The elected officials of COG envision the National Capital Region as the best place to live, work, play and learn. COG fosters regionalism – proposing and facilitating regional solutions – by promoting regional partnerships, developing best practices, applying cutting-edge technologies, and providing a forum for discussion and decision-making.

Message from the Executive Director



The annual report is normally divided into distinct sections—Transportation, Environment, Human Services, and so on. This year, however, I wanted to emphasize how much COG's programs and initiatives relate to each other and to the vision and mission of the organization.

COG is responsible for looking ahead and calling attention to issues that will affect metropolitan Washington in the future. Last year, COG focused on the fast-approaching job and population boom projected for the region and encouraged local leaders to be proactive.

COG also acts as a forum for consensus-building and policy-making. So it was no surprise when COG sparked conversations on issues that merit regional action like youth gangs and transportation access for people with disabilities.

In 2004, COG invested a good deal of energy into mwcog.org, adding a considerable amount of content to the organization's Web site. It is now the best place to go to for the latest news, publications, event information, meeting schedules and documents.

Finally, I personally place a great emphasis on outreach and member services. I keep member jurisdictions up-to-date and informed on COG activities through my frequent visits across the region and my new monthly online newsletter.

In the coming years, I know COG will continue to serve as a catalyst for change and a forum for discussion that always keeps the best interests of the region in mind.

Sincerely,

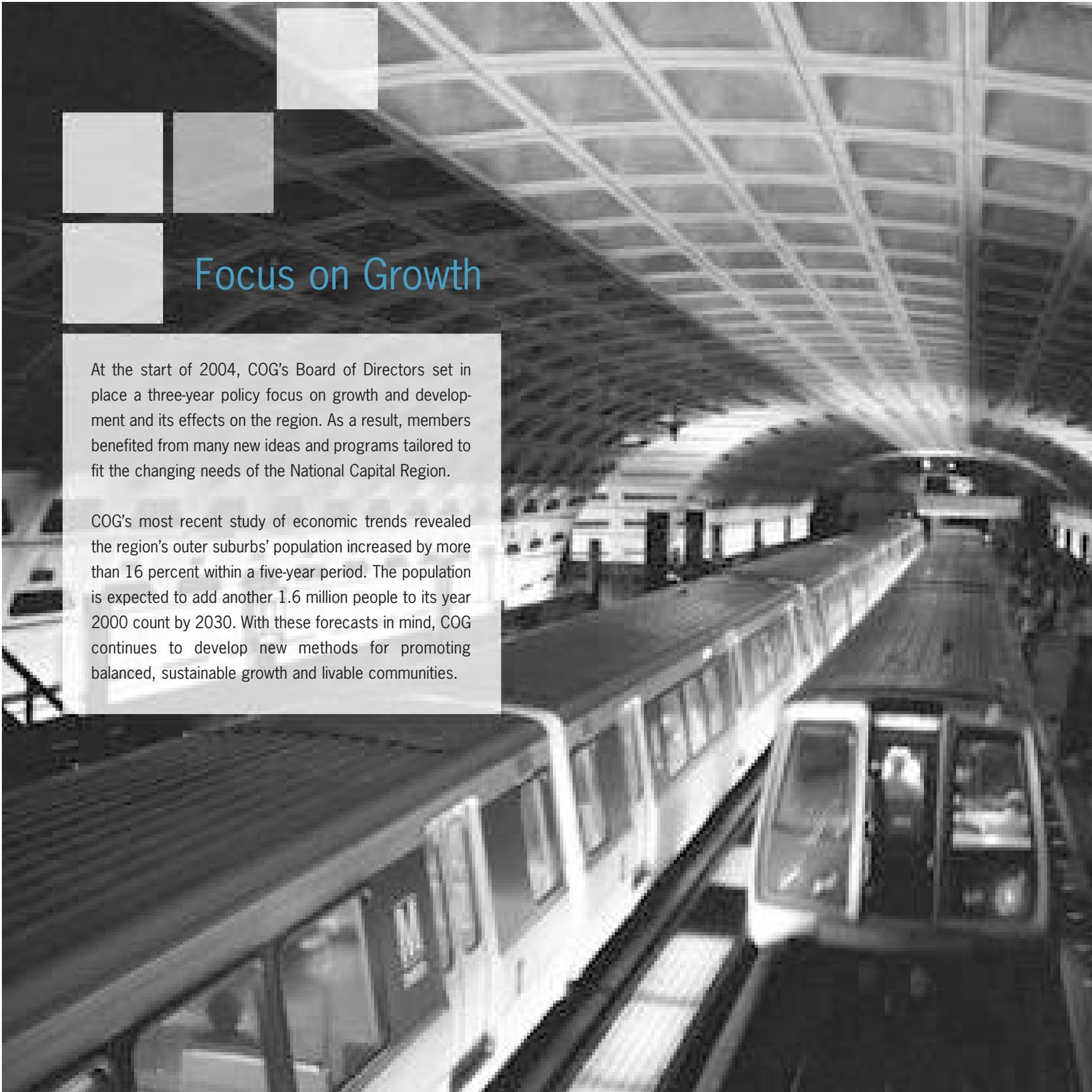
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Robertson
Executive Director



Mission

COG is the premier forum to identify, discuss, and resolve regional issues by convening local governments and other stakeholders to initiate collaborative regional analysis. It is the place where development, implementation, and coordination of intergovernmental policies, plans, partnerships, and programs take place to enhance the quality of life in the National Capital Region.



Focus on Growth

At the start of 2004, COG's Board of Directors set in place a three-year policy focus on growth and development and its effects on the region. As a result, members benefited from many new ideas and programs tailored to fit the changing needs of the National Capital Region.

COG's most recent study of economic trends revealed the region's outer suburbs' population increased by more than 16 percent within a five-year period. The population is expected to add another 1.6 million people to its year 2000 count by 2030. With these forecasts in mind, COG continues to develop new methods for promoting balanced, sustainable growth and livable communities.

Catalyst for a Growing Region

Defining Transportation Needs

One of the most visible effects of this rapid growth is seen on the region's roadways and public transit system. Metropolitan Washington faces unprecedented transportation challenges due to serious funding shortfalls, an aging infrastructure, and rapid job and population growth. In order to prevent a future of crippling gridlock, the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) released *Time to Act*, a brochure emphasizing the region's most critical transportation needs from 2005 to 2010. The region's unfunded transportation projects totaled \$13.2 billion when the brochure was released. In addition to highway and local transit needs, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) faces a particularly critical shortfall of \$2.2 billion for system improvements.

Finding Funds for Metro

The transit system's financial situation prompted the COG Board to approve the creation of an independent Metro Funding Panel. Despite the fact that WMATA is one of the most traveled transit systems in the nation—over 1.1 million trips per day—it is the largest system without a dedicated source of funding. WMATA, like every other transit system in the nation, requires public financial support to close the gap between passenger revenues and costs.

The task of the Metro Funding Panel, co-sponsored by the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council, was to study and recommend alternative sources of funding to ensure WMATA's fiscal health.

Impacting Urban Development

As the region continues to grow, planners, developers and environmentalists struggle to find new ways to limit negative environmental impacts of urban growth. In response, COG worked with Prince George's County and the Anacostia Watershed Toxics Alliance to sponsor the nation's first Low Impact Development Conference (LID). The event drew guests and panelists from as far away as New Zealand to discuss innovative techniques designed to minimize common impacts of development such as flooding, erosion and water pollution.

The conference was one of several COG-sponsored, groundbreaking events including a Hydrogen Technology Forum to discuss alternative sources for generating electricity and the Local Governments and Businesses Leading by Example Conference on finding solutions to air quality challenges.

Encouraging Smart Growth

Recognizing a need to help prepare for continuing growth, COG produced a web-based campaign to educate elected officials, civic groups, the development community and citizens about land use and transportation challenges currently facing the region. The campaign promotes "smart growth," or planning that focuses development into dense, walkable communities of housing, offices and retail space.

Because the same principles of smart growth apply throughout the region, COG packaged informative materials as "implementation kits" on CD-ROM and distributed them to local planning commissions, civic associations and other stakeholders. COG actively promoted the kits and stepped up outreach efforts throughout the region, including broadcasts on many of the region's local government cable television stations. Large-scale promotional events are scheduled for 2005.



Focus on Community

Communities Working Together

As a forum for decision-making and policy-building, COG continues to bring together elected officials and other key stakeholders for discussion on a variety of important topics. Through COG, officials are provided with new tools to assist them in finding ways to ensure the region continues to be the best place to live, work, play and learn.



Photo Credit: Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail



Photo Credit: DC Convention & Tourism Corporation

Combating Regional Gang Activity

With gangs and gang-related violence threatening an increasing number of young people and neighborhoods in metropolitan Washington, COG took the initiative to plan and coordinate the area's first Regional Gang Summit. A diverse group of human services providers, educators, law enforcement officers, community groups, U.S. Congressmen, and local elected officials—over 500 people from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia—participated in the one-day conference in Arlington.

Summit speakers emphasized the need for a balanced approach to combat gang activity, promoting prevention and intervention programs in coordination with suppression and law enforcement measures. The summit, co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice-Office of Justice Programs,



the Arlington County Police Department, and Cox Communications, was an important first step towards the development of a region-wide anti-gang initiative.

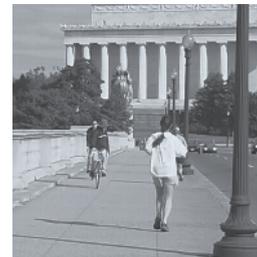
Encouraging Access for All

The Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) Access for All advisory committee sponsored Disability Awareness Day to stress the important role accessible transportation plays in getting people with disabilities to work. According to a 2004 National Organization on Disability (NOD)/Harris national survey, people with disabilities are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation as people without disabilities.

To raise public awareness, regional transportation leaders and news reporters accompanied people with disabilities on their morning commutes to a press conference at COG. Speakers at the press conference noted different accessibility features and challenges in the region's transportation system. Later that day, the TPB supported a resolution recognizing the importance of accessible and dependable transit service, sidewalks, and safe pedestrian crossings for people with disabilities.

Fostering Decisions in Transportation

The TPB at COG continues to bring together elected officials and key stakeholders to discuss and approve updated plans for the area's roadways and transit systems. The region's 2004 long-range transportation plan generated a great deal of interest because of one controversial project, Maryland's Intercounty Connector (ICC), a proposed highway that would link Interstate 270 with Interstate 95 and U.S. Route 1 in suburban Maryland. In order for local transportation projects like the ICC to receive federal funding, they must be incorporated in the TPB-approved regional plan.



Although a complicated issue, members of the TPB were able to set policy for the project through a series of meetings and votes held at COG. After a long debate, members of the TPB decided in April to include the ICC with other proposed projects for an air quality evaluation of the plan. By November, the TPB was briefed by COG staff that the plan, including the ICC, met federal air quality requirements and the projects had adequate funding proposals for approval. The majority of TPB members approved the plan and the ICC cleared a major hurdle.

Bringing Universities, Neighboring Governments Together

Seeing the need to engage local universities and their neighboring communities, COG invited government managers and university officials to the Town-Gown Workshop to discuss shared concerns like the loss of tax revenues, parking problems, and the demand for affordable

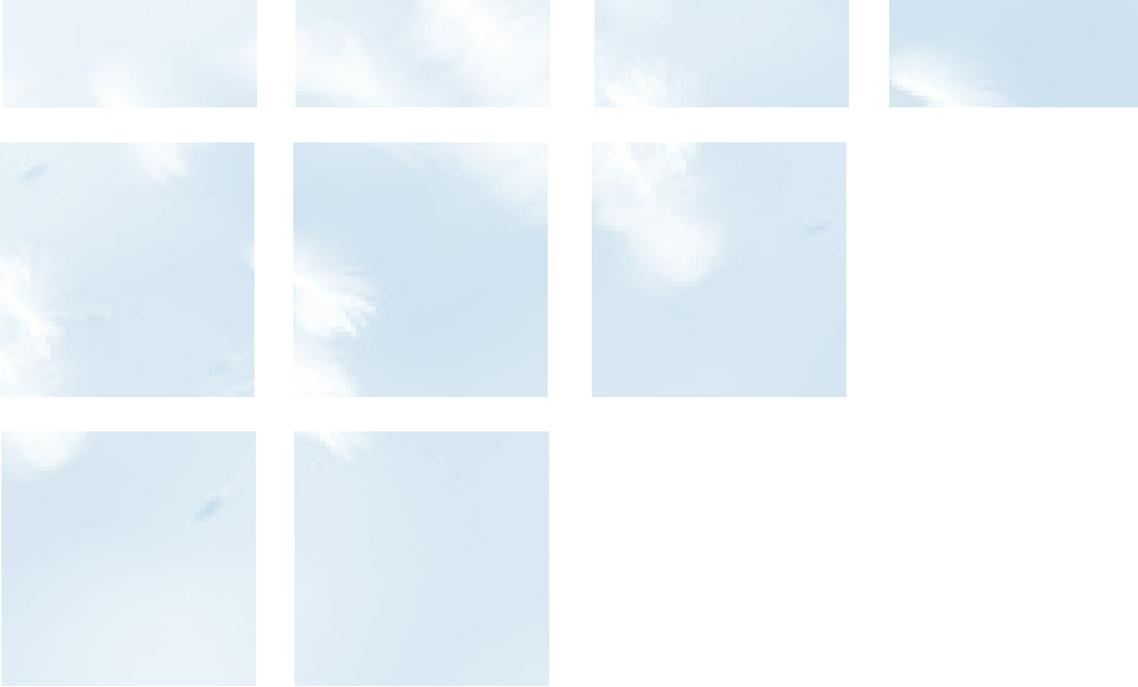
student housing. Speakers pointed out the economic benefits universities offer, such as their research and development parks, as well as the pool of recent graduates they provide the region. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area and the International City/County Management Association.

Hosting Radio Town Halls

In 2004, COG partnered with Clear Channel to host two radio town hall meetings on timely regional issues like gangs, teenage driving fatalities, emergency preparedness and traffic congestion. Elected officials, chief administrative officers and other regional leaders served as panelists at the meetings and responded to questions and comments from a studio audience and listeners who phoned in. Due to their success, COG and Clear Channel plan on holding these forums on a quarterly schedule in 2005.



Focus on Environment



Enhancing Quality of Life

Several issues that threaten the region's quality of life are interconnected —air pollution, traffic congestion and a lack of affordable housing. COG is best suited to meet these challenges because its programs have been developed to work together with the goal of enhancing the region's quality of life. COG also looks after the region's long-term interests by concerning itself with the area's neediest residents and defending the region's natural resources.

Reaching Out to Youth

For years, COG—largely through partnerships and generous funding from the Freddie Mac Foundation—has fostered healing and hope to the region’s 6,000 children in foster care. Hundreds of children have been placed in permanent homes through Wednesday’s Child, an award-winning weekly television feature co-sponsored by Freddie Mac and NBC-4, and hundreds of foster parents have been honored at a special annual gala celebration held each spring beginning in 2003.

In 2004, it became clear, however, that foster children were not the only ones standing to benefit from some kind-hearted generosity. So began the “Work of Heart” Volunteer Respite Program, an innovative project operating under the principle that foster parents need breaks as much or even more than biological parents do but do not have the same access to caretakers and babysitters. Because only people with the proper licensures can care for foster children overnight, COG is now training families and individuals to care for foster children on a weekend basis.

Tracking Regional Homelessness

Among the region’s most pressing concerns are its lack of affordable housing and an increasing homeless population. Through various partnerships and the work of its committees, COG remained committed to helping find solutions to both. The fourth annual Homeless Enumeration for the Washington Metropolitan Region established new methods for providing data that better equips local jurisdictions and policy-makers to pinpoint and track the homeless population, so more affordable, permanent housing can be made available to disadvantaged families and individuals.

The Washington Area Housing Trust Fund (WAHTF), meanwhile, continued to equip local developers to address a shortage of affordable housing. The Trust Fund, founded by COG to help address this shortage, closed on six loans with below-market interest rates that will help to preserve or create 500 affordable homes in the region. WAHTF has set a goal of \$15 million to assist in develop and preservation of 10,000 affordable housing units.

Promoting Alternative Commutes

Seeking ways to relieve congestion on the region’s roadways, Commuter Connections—a network of regional transportation organizations supported by COG—was active in supporting and promoting alternatives to driving alone throughout the year.

Commuter Connections teamed up again with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association to organize Bike to Work Day. More than 4,000 people joined together to promote bicycling, a healthy commuting alternative that reduces road congestion and air pollutants.

At the Senior Executive’s Forum on Telework, area business leaders and elected officials touted the benefits of teleworking and pointed to promising figures from Commuter Connections’ State of the Commute survey indicating that an additional 400,000 employees would and could telecommute if given the opportunity.

Cleaning the Air

COG continued to make great strides in improving the region’s air quality. The Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) approved a revised air quality plan, paving the way for the District of Columbia, Maryland





and Virginia to submit the plan to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval. The plan, called a State Implementation Plan (SIP), uses new models and improved data to provide a more accurate estimate of pollutants from motor vehicles and travel demand in the region.

COG also offered incentives for local businesses and individuals to do their part in helping to improve the region's air. More than 300 area organizations currently participate in Air Quality Action Days, a program that encourages people on certain days to wait until after dark to refuel their cars and limit driving by taking public transit.

Promoting Water Conservation

The two-year-old Wise Water Use public education campaign took a creative turn when COG distributed national "Water, Use it Wisely®" paraphernalia to sports fans at a Washington Capitals hockey game, a DC United soccer match, and local minor league baseball games. Advertisements were also placed on local buses and in Metrorail stations to educate the public on the importance of using water in a responsible and efficient manner.

During 2004, there were also concerted efforts to reach out to school-age children through presentations and projects. For one such project, funded by a Pollution Prevention educational grant, COG staff worked with elementary and middle school students in the District of Columbia to provide instruction on the importance of pollution control at their schools and in the watersheds where they live.



Reducing Noise Pollution

One in-depth project COG's environmental department took on in 2004 sought to facilitate improvement of a significant but often-overlooked aspect of urban living: noise pollution. To help ensure comfort for residents, COG's Committee on Noise Abatement and Aviation at National and Dulles Airports partnered with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to help conduct a regional Noise Compatibility Study for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. COG's work in the National Airport evaluation included a community outreach project involving focus groups and surveys of 1,200 residents and resulted in several recommendations from a special research committee, including suggestions for development of advanced arrival and departure procedures, technological updates to monitoring and tracking systems, and enhancement of the airport's complaint system.

Restoring the Bay and its Tributaries

Other important work in helping to solve problems related to increasing pollution included COG's support of the Bay States' Tributary Strategies, which were published in 2004 along with a multibillion dollar price tag. COG worked closely with the states in preparation of these strategies and engaged in funding issues. One Board member was invited to join the multistate Chesapeake Bay Watershed Blue Ribbon Finance Panel, a group charged with developing innovative solutions to financing the multi-billion dollar effort needed for restoration. The panel issued a report in October that called for creation of a regional finance authority to guide restoration. COG supported the panel's work, and plans to submit feedback to the Finance Panel in early 2005.



Photo Credit: Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association



Focus on Safety

Thanks to persistent work of the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council, the area became better prepared for emergencies in 2004. COG built upon its Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP) – the handbook for coordinating response to local threats since it was adopted by the COG Board in 2002 – to put in place new communications equipment and procedures.

Keeping the Region Safe

Expanding Resources

COG helped bring together local, state and federal government officials for a coordinated approach to homeland security planning efforts and set priorities a federal Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant of \$29 million in fiscal year 2004. Funds were dedicated to a variety of security measures that previously had not been available to member jurisdictions, such as domestic preparedness training exercises and a campaign for citizen education. The UASI funds allowed for the purchase of personal protective equipment to help outfit first responders, as well as a regional cache of 800 megahertz radios that allow firefighters and police to communicate with each other quickly and directly.

Other significant steps were made with support of COG's various policy committees. A new region-wide system was developed by the Health Officers Committee to track disease symptoms, enabling pharmacists, emergency rooms, laboratories and others to quickly react with appropriate care. A Regional Water Supply Emergency Plan was also created

to guide water utilities in the event of a regional drinking water incident or emergency. Within the emergency transportation planning process, the complicated issues of evacuation and "sheltering in place," which means to stay indoors during emergencies, were addressed.

For the first time, the region's Public Information Officers (PIO) were given access to a virtual Joint Information Center. This new technology, produced in association with a local nonprofit, the Stargazer Foundation, now provides a portal for immediate inter-jurisdictional contact between PIOs, elected officials and emergency managers to develop common messages.

These improvements in communications and coordination are largely the result of a partnership between elected officials, emergency managers and the private and non-profit sector organizations that make up the Council. The Emergency Preparedness Council strongly supported citizens' education program, to be implemented in 2005, that will help the public more fully understand its role in regional security.

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Vice President
Carol Schwartz

Vice President
Michael Knapp

Secretary-Treasurer
Robert C. Bobb

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Vice Chair
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Mayor
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Phil Mendelson

Council Member
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College Park Council Member
Robert Catlin

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Montgomery County Council Member
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Maureen S. Caddigan

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Delegate
James Scott

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

Chair
Phil Mendelson, District of Columbia

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

Chair
T. Dana Kauffman,
Fairfax County

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David J. Robertson

Assistant Executive Director
George S. Rice, Jr.

General Counsel
F. Lee Ruck

Chief Financial Officer
Sonny A. Amores

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Carl R. Kalish

Human Resources Management Director
Imelda Roberts

Public Affairs Director
Jeanne Saddler

Chief Technology Officer
Chris Willey

Environmental Programs Director
Stuart A. Freudberg

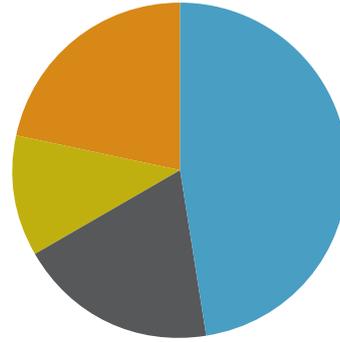
Transportation Planning Director
Ronald F. Kirby

Human Services, Planning and Public Safety Director
Calvin L. Smith, Sr.

Budget: FY 2004 Highlights

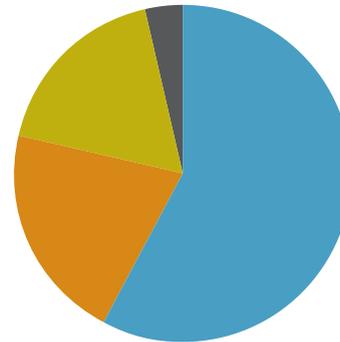
Revenue Sources

 Federal Grants and Contracts	\$10,556,714
 State Grants and Contracts	\$4,274,562
 Local Government Contributions	\$2,582,766
 Special Contributions	\$4,780,448
Total Revenues	\$22,194,490



Expenditures by Program

 Transportation Planning	\$12,865,000
 Environmental Programs	\$4,640,762
 Human Services, Planning & Public Safety	\$3,915,200
 Direct Services to Local and State Governments	\$773,528
Total Expenditures	\$22,194,490





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