VISUALIZE 2050

**Visualize 2050
Planning and
Programming Process**

Land Use and Transportation Coordination

Part 12 of 27

National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

December 2025

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OVERVIEW OF LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

Land use refers to the activities that people conduct on land such as residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, and recreational, whereas land development refers to how land is changed to conduct the activities for which it will be used. These activities result in the number of people who reside in the region and their distribution throughout the region's localities as well as the number of employees and their place of work.

Decisions around the National Capital Region's land, how it is used and developed, have been made over centuries by many people. The results of past land use and development decisions impact where people live and work today and serve as a basis for how transportation planning and programming decisions are made for the future.

TPB'S ROLE AND KEY STAFF

The TPB is not directly responsible for land use or development decisions. Instead, the authority to plan and regulate land use and development rests with member local governments. The TPB applies assumptions about current and future land use, primarily information about population, employment, and the amount and location of current and projected households in its planning activities. The primary source of data used by the TPB in making assumptions about current and future growth is the Cooperative Forecasts of Population, Households, and Employment, which are prepared by local governments through a coordinated process at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and ultimately are approved by the COG Board of Directors. The TPB utilizes Cooperative Forecasting data in its transportation modeling activities, which enables the TPB to estimate the current and future travel conditions and assess the collective effect of current and future planned transportation projects.

TABLE 12.1: KEY STAFF

COG/TPB Staff	Title	Role
Kanti Srikanth	Deputy Executive Director	Staff Director for the TPB
Greg Goodwin	Principal Planner	Contributor
John Kent	Regional Planner	Contributor
Timothy Canan	TPB Planning Data and Research Program Director	Contributor/TPB staff Coordinator

Role of TPB Subcommittees

The process to prepare COG's Cooperative Forecasts is closely coordinated with the metropolitan transportation planning process undertaken by the TPB to ensure that the TPB is using the latest set of adopted forecasts and that these forecasts meet the technical specifications necessary to

be incorporated into TPB's travel demand forecasting activities. This coordination occurs at the staff level between COG's Department of Community Planning and Services (DCPS), which supports the development of the Cooperative Forecasts, and COG's Department of Transportation Planning, which supports the metropolitan transportation planning process. Upon completion of a new series or "round" of forecasts, DCPS staff briefs the TPB Technical Committee, Travel Forecasting Subcommittee, and the Transportation Planning Board.

ROLE OF KEY PLANNING AGENCIES

As noted, COG coordinates the development of the Cooperative Forecasts of population, households, and employment throughout the region for use in its planning activities as well as by the TPB and other state, regional, and local agencies. A final product of every major round of the Cooperative Forecasts is the update of the Regional Activity Centers (RACs) map. The Cooperative Forecasts, including the updated RACs map, are prepared under the oversight of COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) and are approved by the COG Board of Directors. Staff within DCPS, in consultation with COG's transportation planning staff, coordinate this activity on behalf of COG.

The Cooperative Forecasting and Data Subcommittee (CFDS) is a technical subcommittee to the PDTAC. The subcommittee is responsible for preparing 25-year population, household and employment forecasts at the jurisdictional level and at the Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) level for the COG region.

The CFDS is composed of local government planners with expertise in demographics, land use, and economics who are the technical leads for developing the Cooperative Forecasts at the jurisdictional level and participate with COG when developing the Cooperative Forecasts. Table 12.2 lists the key planning agencies and their role.

TABLE 12.2: KEY PLANNING AGENCIES

Planning Agency	Role
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	Administers the Cooperative Forecasting Program and Process for Designating Regional Activity Centers
Cooperative Forecasting and Data Subcommittee (CFDS) Members	Technical Committee to the Cooperative Forecasting Program
City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning	Technical Contributor
Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development	Technical Contributor
District of Columbia Office of Planning	Technical Contributor
Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management	Technical Contributor
Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget	Technical Contributor

Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development	Technical Contributor
City of Fairfax Department of Community Development and Planning	Technical Contributor
City of Falls Church Community Planning and Economic Development Services	Technical Contributor
City of Frederick Planning Department	Technical Contributor
Frederick County Department of Community Development	Technical Contributor
City of Gaithersburg Department of Planning and Code Administration	Technical Contributor
Loudoun County Department of Management and Budget	Technical Contributor
City of Manassas Department of Community Development	Technical Contributor
City of Manassas Park Development Services Division	Technical Contributor
Montgomery County Planning Department	Technical Contributor
Prince George's County Planning Department	Technical Contributor
Prince William County Planning Office	Technical Contributor
City of Rockville Department of Planning and Code Administration	Technical Contributor
Other Regional Partners	**Role**
Baltimore Metropolitan Council	Technical Contributor
Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	Technical Contributor
Northern Virginia Regional Commission	Technical Advisor
Maryland Department of Planning	Technical Advisor

THE COOPERATIVE FORECASTING PROCESS

The Cooperative Forecast is a multi-stage, "top-down/bottom-up" process undertaken by PDTAC and the Cooperative Forecasting and Data Subcommittee.

The process first utilizes a regional econometric model that projects employment, population, and households for the metropolitan Washington region based on national economic trends and local demographic factors. Concurrently, local jurisdictions develop independent projections of population, households, and employment based on pipeline development, market conditions, planned transportation improvements, and adopted land use plans and zoning, taking into account the preliminary regional projections. In the final stage, the two sets of projections are reconciled into one consistent set of regional, jurisdictional and small-area (TAZ) forecasts.

During the spring of 2022, COG and TPB staff requested the support of an outside consultant to provide technical assistance to help answer and understand the potential short-term and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on growth assumptions related to the Round 10.0 Cooperative Forecast. The consultant, ICF, helped:

- Better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on utilization, density, and development of commercial office space in the region.
- Develop a "range" of potential regional forecasts to 2050 given ongoing economic uncertainties.
- Access emerging trends in regional housing location and choice.
- Increase understanding of future regional household size trends.

The Round 10.0 Cooperative Forecasts were developed during 2022 and approved by the PDTAC in April of 2023 and the COG Board in June 2023. The report, Growth Trends to 2050: Cooperative Forecasting in the Washington Region[1] contains a detailed assessment of the Round 10.0 forecasting process. The data shown in Tables 12.4, 12.5, and 12.6 provide employment, population and households by jurisdiction between 2020-2050. This data serves as input to the TPB's regional travel demand model used to assess future transportation system performance, as described further in Part 16.

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[1] Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (November 3, 2023). *Growth Trends to 2050: Cooperative Forecasting in the Washington Region.* https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2023/11/03/growth-trends-cooperative-forecasting-in-metropolitan-washington-cooperative-forecast-featured-publications-growth--development/

TABLE 12.4: SUMMARY OF EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS ROUND 10.0 COOPERATIVE FORECASTS (THOUSANDS)

Jurisdiction	Round 10.0 Base Year							2020 to 2050 Growth		COG/TPB Planning Area
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	Number	% Change	Share
District of Columbia	785.9	846.1	886.3	923.5	954.4	989.0	1,021.6	235.7	30.0%	23.9%
Arlington County	221.6	223.2	236.7	259.2	266.4	275.3	283.7	62.1	28.0%	6.3%
City of Alexandria	101.8	101.0	99.3	106.6	112.8	116.8	123.2	21.4	21.1%	2.2%
Central Jurisdictions	**1,109.3**	**1,170.2**	**1,222.2**	**1,289.3**	**1,333.5**	**1,381.2**	**1,428.5**	**319.2**	**28.8%**	**32.3%**
Montgomery County	493.6	522.9	545.6	568.3	591.0	613.8	636.5	142.9	29.0%	14.5%
City of Rockville[1]	*76.4*	*78.7*	*81.1*	*83.8*	*87.8*	*91.1*	*94.5*	*18.0*	*23.6%*	*1.8%*
City of Gaithersburg[1]	*43.0*	*48.0*	*52.0*	*54.5*	*56.5*	*58.0*	*59.0*	*16.0*	*37.2%*	*1.6%*
Prince George's County	343.5	356.7	366.8	381.9	396.7	416.0	435.0	91.5	26.6%	9.3%
Fairfax County[2]	658.8	690.5	750.8	788.8	812.5	832.0	842.0	183.2	27.8%	18.6%
City of Fairfax	20.5	22.0	22.3	22.6	22.9	23.2	23.5	3.0	14.6%	0.3%

City of Falls Church	12.4	13.1	15.4	16.5	17.4	18.3	19.4	7.1	57.0%	0.7%
Inner Suburbs	**1,528.7**	**1,605.2**	**1,700.9**	**1,778.1**	**1,840.6**	**1,903.2**	**1,956.4**	**427.7**	**28.0%**	**43.3%**
Loudoun County	187.7	210.3	227.0	240.8	251.5	258.7	265.8	78.2	41.7%	7.9%
Prince William County	161.8	178.6	194.4	209.7	223.4	235.6	246.4	84.7	52.3%	8.6%
City of Manassas	25.3	26.1	26.9	27.7	28.3	28.8	29.3	3.9	15.5%	0.4%
City of Manassas Park	4.3	4.7	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	1.1	25.5%	0.1%
Charles County	43.9	46.1	49.8	54.0	57.4	60.0	62.2	18.3	41.8%	1.9%
Frederick County	108.3	115.6	123.8	132.5	141.8	151.8	162.5	54.2	50.1%	5.5%
City of Frederick[3]	*57.4*	*60.1*	*64.4*	*67.6*	*69.5*	*74.4*	*79.6*	*22.2*	*38.7%*	*2.3%*
Outer Suburbs	**531.3**	**581.4**	**626.8**	**669.9**	**707.7**	**740.2**	**771.7**	**240.5**	**45.3%**	**24.4%**
Virginia Jurisdictions	1,394.2	1,469.5	1,577.7	1,677.0	1,740.4	1,794.0	1,838.9	444.7	31.9%	45.0%
Maryland Jurisdictions	989.2	1,041.3	1,086.0	1,136.8	1,187.0	1,241.6	1,296.2	307.0	31.0%	31.1%
COG Region	**3,169.2**	**3,356.9**	**3,549.9**	**3,737.3**	**3,881.7**	**4,024.6**	**4,156.6**	**987.4**	**31.2%**	**100.0%**

[1] Included in the Montgomery County total.

[2] Forecasts for all years include Fairfax County Government employees working at the Fairfax County Judicial Complex.

[3] Included in the Frederick County total.

TABLE 12.5: SUMMARY OF POPULATION FORECASTS ROUND 10.0 COOPERATIVE FORECASTS (THOUSANDS)

Jurisdiction	Round 10.0 Base Year							2020 to 2050 Growth		COG/TPB Planning Area
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	Number	% Change	Share
District of Columbia	689.5	697.6	728.6	757.2	787.1	816.4	844.4	154.9	22.5%	10.7%
Arlington County	238.6	245.8	260.2	272.9	285.2	298.0	311.2	72.6	30.4%	5.0%
City of Alexandria	159.5	180.5	202.0	222.2	239.8	252.9	261.9	102.4	64.2%	7.1%
Central Jurisdictions	**1,087.6**	**1,124.0**	**1,190.8**	**1,252.3**	**1,312.2**	**1,367.3**	**1,417.5**	**329.8**	**30.3%**	**22.7%**
Montgomery County	1,061.2	1,083.0	1,118.0	1,153.9	1,189.6	1,222.2	1,250.7	189.4	17.8%	13.1%
City of Rockville[1]	67.8	70.9	74.6	78.7	82.9	87.5	92.7	24.9	36.8%	1.7%
City of Gaithersburg[1]	69.7	72.5	75.7	78.5	81.2	83.7	85.8	16.1	23.2%	1.1%
Prince George's County	967.2	997.8	1,033.0	1,081.7	1,122.7	1,159.6	1,193.8	226.5	23.4%	15.6%
Fairfax County	1,171.9	1,202.4	1,247.5	1,283.7	1,319.0	1,353.6	1,384.0	212.1	18.1%	14.6%
City of Fairfax	24.1	27.8	32.7	34.4	36.1	37.8	39.6	15.4	63.8%	1.1%

City of Falls Church	14.7	15.5	18.0	19.6	20.7	21.8	23.3	8.6	58.8%	0.6%
Inner Suburbs	**3,239.1**	**3,326.5**	**3,449.1**	**3,573.3**	**3,688.1**	**3,794.9**	**3,891.2**	**652.1**	**20.1%**	**45.0%**
Loudoun County	421.0	456.2	493.9	515.5	529.6	539.2	548.5	127.6	30.3%	8.8%
Prince William County	483.8	515.2	536.6	553.0	565.0	573.7	579.6	95.7	19.8%	6.6%
City of Manassas	42.8	43.7	46.3	47.6	48.5	49.5	50.4	7.7	17.9%	0.5%
City of Manassas Park	17.2	19.0	20.4	20.9	21.4	21.9	22.4	5.2	30.3%	0.4%
Charles County	168.0	176.3	193.6	203.8	216.5	230.4	242.7	74.6	44.4%	5.1%
Frederick County	271.7	293.2	316.3	341.3	368.3	397.4	428.8	157.1	57.8%	10.8%
City of Frederick[2]	78.2	83.8	89.5	95.1	100.8	106.4	112.0	33.9	43.3%	2.3%
Outer Suburbs	**1,404.5**	**1,503.7**	**1,607.3**	**1,682.2**	**1,749.5**	**1,812.2**	**1,872.4**	**467.9**	**33.3%**	**32.3%**
Virginia Jurisdictions	2,573.5	2,706.2	2,857.6	2,969.8	3,065.4	3,148.4	3,220.8	647.3	25.2%	44.6%
Maryland Jurisdictions	2,468.2	2,550.3	2,661.0	2,780.8	2,897.2	3,009.6	3,115.9	647.7	26.2%	44.7%
COG Region	**5,731.3**	**5,954.2**	**6,247.2**	**6,507.8**	**6,749.7**	**6,974.5**	**7,181.1**	**1,449.8**	**25.3%**	**100.0%**

[1] Included in the Montgomery County total.
[2] Included in the Frederick County total.

TABLE 12.6: SUMMARY OF HOUSEHOLD FORECASTS ROUND 10.0 COOPERATIVE FORECASTS (THOUSANDS)

Jurisdiction	Round 10.0 Base Year							2020 to 2050 Growth		COG/TPB Planning Area
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	Number	% Change	Share
District of Columbia	312.4	344.2	366.8	386.6	407.6	426.0	441.4	129.0	41.3%	19.1%
Arlington County	109.9	118.2	126.2	133.3	140.0	146.9	153.6	43.7	39.8%	6.5%
City of Alexandria	75.6	85.7	96.4	106.7	115.4	122.0	126.0	50.5	66.8%	7.5%
Central Jurisdictions	**497.9**	**548.1**	**589.4**	**626.6**	**663.1**	**695.0**	**721.1**	**223.2**	**44.8%**	**33.0%**
Montgomery County	386.6	398.4	416.5	434.1	450.0	463.2	474.3	87.7	22.7%	13.0%
City of Rockville[1]	28.2	29.9	31.7	33.7	35.8	38.1	40.6	12.4	43.8%	1.8%
City of Gaithersburg[1]	25.9	27.2	28.9	30.3	31.7	33.0	34.2	8.3	32.0%	1.2%
Prince George's County	342.2	353.7	367.4	385.9	400.5	413.7	425.9	83.7	24.5%	12.4%
Fairfax County[2]	417.5	431.5	451.2	467.1	482.4	497.5	510.8	93.3	22.4%	13.8%
City of Fairfax	9.3	10.6	13.0	13.8	14.6	15.4	16.3	6.9	74.3%	1.0%

City of Falls Church	5.8	7.3	8.7	9.6	10.3	11.1	12.1	6.3	108.5%	0.9%
Inner Suburbs	**1,161.5**	**1,201.6**	**1,256.9**	**1,310.5**	**1,358.0**	**1,400.9**	**1,439.4**	**277.9**	**23.9%**	**41.1%**
Loudoun County	137.4	148.9	161.7	169.5	174.7	178.2	181.7	44.3	32.2%	6.5%
Prince William County	153.9	165.0	173.4	180.0	185.1	189.0	191.9	38.0	24.7%	5.6%
City of Manassas	14.0	14.3	15.1	15.5	15.8	16.1	16.4	2.4	17.5%	0.4%
City of Manassas Park	5.4	6.2	6.9	7.1	7.4	7.7	8.0	2.6	47.9%	0.4%
Charles County	59.1	64.3	71.2	75.3	80.0	85.2	89.7	30.6	51.8%	4.5%
Frederick County	98.4	106.2	114.5	123.5	133.2	144.3	155.7	57.3	58.3%	8.5%
City of Frederick[3]	31.8	34.1	36.3	38.7	40.9	43.3	45.6	13.8	43.3%	2.0%
Outer Suburbs	**468.1**	**504.9**	**542.7**	**571.0**	**596.2**	**620.4**	**643.3**	**175.2**	**37.4%**	**25.9%**
Virginia Jurisdictions	928.8	987.7	1,052.5	1,102.6	1,145.8	1,184.0	1,216.8	288.0	31.0%	42.6%
Maryland Jurisdictions	886.3	922.6	969.7	1,018.8	1,063.7	1,106.3	1,145.6	259.3	29.3%	38.3%
COG Region	**2,127.5**	**2,254.5**	**2,389.0**	**2,508.1**	**2,617.2**	**2,716.3**	**2,803.8**	**676.3**	**31.8%**	**100.0%**

REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTERS

Regional Activity Centers (RACs) are the locations that will accommodate most of the region's future growth and play a central role in achieving the Region Forward goals for prosperity, accessibility, sustainability, and livability. They include existing urban centers, priority growth areas, traditional towns, and transit hubs, and are the spatial framework for strategic policy decisions and capital investments. The Regional Activity Centers map, available during the majority of Visualize 2050's planning process, was developed with local planning officials and the Region Forward Coalition and approved by the COG Board in 2013. Throughout 2024, COG staff worked with staff of member jurisdictions to update the regional activity centers for approval by the COG Board in 2025. While the 2013 version was available for member reference during the project inputs solicitation, the latest version from 2025 is applied to the 2050 outlook in the plan.[2]

Historical Context to Regional Activity Centers

To address the challenge of a fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan, as described more fully in Part 1, the 1998 TPB Vision was a short and influential policy document that laid out eight broad goals to guide the region's transportation investments into the 21st century. A range of objectives and strategies were included in the Vision to show how its eight primary goals could be reached. Goal 2 of the Vision directed that the region "…develop, implement, and maintain an interconnected transportation system that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region, including a healthy regional core and dynamic regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing and services in a walkable environment."[3] Taking direction from this goal, COG staff led the identification of the region's activity centers. The COG Board of Directors approved the first map of Regional Activity Centers in 2003 and an update in 2006.

In 2012, COG worked with local planning officials to carry out an extensive redesign of the regional Activity Centers map. The new map was approved by the COG Board of Directors in January 2013 and identified 141 Activity Centers.

COG's Region Forward Coalition in 2010 established a target for the region to capture 75 percent of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50 percent of new households in Regional Activity Centers.

Updating Activity Centers during 2024

Beginning in late 2023, PDTAC members began work to update the Regional Activity Centers map. Building on the criteria developed in the 2012/2013 version, the Planning Directors approved a process to identify Activity Centers based upon a combination of 2 "Core" and 2 "Additional."

"Core" requirements for identifying Activity Centers are:

- **Policy:** In **2023,** the center or priority growth area should be designated in a jurisdiction's adopted comprehensive/general plan or other locally adopted land use plan.
- **Density:** By **2050,** the Center will have a person per acre density (employment + population) that falls within the top one-half of densities within the jurisdiction.

The "Additional" requirements for Activity Centers include:

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[2] Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (May 14, 2025). *Regional Activity Centers Maps.* https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2025/05/14/regional-activity-centers-maps-activity-centers-land-use-region-forward/
[3] National Capital Transportation Planning Board (October 15, 1998). *The TPB Vision.* https://www.mwcog.org/documents/tpbvision/

- **Intersection Density:** In **2023,** have at least 55 intersections per square mile.
- **Transit Capacity:** In **2023,** have:
- Existing high capacity/performance transit (e.g. Metrorail, BRT, commuter rail, OR light rail) OR
- A planned transit station identified in the constrained element of Visualize 2045, OR
- A planned transit station with dedicated local funding.
- **Land Use Mix:** In **2023**, have a locally adopted land use plan/ordinance that encourages mixed-use development (e.g. through a mixed-use designation, form-based codes, or overlay zoning).
- **Housing & Transportation Affordability:** Combined housing and transportation costs do not exceed 45% of regional median income as measured by the H + T Index.

Using these criteria, DCPS staff worked with the Planning Directors throughout 2024 to identify and compile the new Activity Centers adopted by the COG Board in 2025.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The development of the Cooperative Forecasts, updates to the Regional Activity Centers Map, and all regional land use analysis and coordination activities are carried out at the technical level through CFDS and under the oversight of PDTAC. The CFDS and PDTAC conduct their business in monthly meetings, which in accordance with COG policy, are accessible to the public. In addition, it is important to note that the Cooperative Forecasts and the corresponding Regional Activity Centers update are themselves developed in accordance with the adopted land use plans and policies of local governments, and these plans and policies are developed through public processes carried out by individual local governments. The Cooperative Forecasts and Regional Activity Centers updates are also presented to the public at TPB meetings, at which time members of the public have the opportunity to comment, and also through presentations to the TPB's public-facing advisory committees, such as the Community Advisory Committee. Work products related to the Cooperative Forecasts and Regional Activity Centers are accessible from COG's website, and technical data and geospatial data products are accessible from TPB Regional Transportation Data Clearinghouse.