

January 25, 2021

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 73 - State and Local Government and Private Employers – Teleworking

Dear Chair McIntosh:

As home to both the Washington region’s metropolitan planning organization, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), as well as its Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, Commuter Connections, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has a long history of supporting forward-looking transportation plans and mobility solutions, such as telework.

Through Commuter Connections and in partnership with the TPB, COG has contributed to a sustained growth in telework regionwide and sought to further expand its use. And COG believes the widespread adoption of telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the prospects for further growth is very good, while acknowledging that not all jobs can be done remotely.

For your reference, COG would like to share the following information on telework for legislators as they consider efforts to expand telework.

Telework is a key strategy for dealing with future growth and traffic congestion. It also results in decreased emissions and cleaner air, reduced energy consumption, and improved quality of life for area workers. When the TPB adopted its long-range transportation plan in 2014, peak period congestion was forecast to grow by 60 to 70 percent despite a planned investment of about \$40 billion over a 25-year period. Recognizing the urgent need to shape better outcomes, the board examined initiatives that would significantly improve the transportation system’s performance. It found that increasing telework and other TDM initiatives to reduce solo driving offered the most positive trends, so the TPB adopted this strategy as one of its seven aspirational initiatives in its *Visualize 2045* long-range plan.

Pre-pandemic, many area employees were teleworking, but telework was growing at a slow rate. For the past several decades, Commuter Connections—which is funded by MDOT as well as VDOT and DDOT—has promoted telework, offered employers assistance in establishing programs, and tracked its steady growth in metropolitan Washington. According to its most recent *State of the Commute Survey* in 2019, 35 percent of commuters reported working remotely or from home at least occasionally, which is up from 19 percent in 2007. These teleworkers represented almost 1.1 million people.

During the pandemic, many area employers turned to telework at unprecedented levels to ensure the safety of their employees and the continuity of their business operations. Officials

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are now reviewing the impacts of increased teleworking during COVID-19 and considering how to maximize its use once the health crisis is over. In May and June, Commuter Connections surveyed area employers who participate in its employer outreach program about teleworking at their organizations, including questions about the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on telework. Nearly all (97 percent) of the 180 employers that participated in the survey said at least some employees were teleworking since the start of the pandemic. More than half (55 percent) said all employees teleworked all of their workdays. The average share of employees who teleworked grew to 82 percent at sites with telework already in place. Fifty-seven percent of work sites expected to see a long-term increase in teleworking, even when the pandemic is over.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you. If you have any questions, I encourage you to contact COG's Deputy Executive Director of Metropolitan Planning Kanti Srikanth at 202-962-3257 or ksrikanth@mwkog.org.

Sincerely,



Chuck Bean
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Carol L. Krimm