

**George Washington Planning District
Regional Strategic Plan Update**

FY 2013-2014



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Strategic Plan Update, FY 13-14

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Executive Summary

The George Washington Regional Commission, as a Planning District Commission of the Commonwealth of Virginia, is required under the Virginia Regional Cooperation Act to develop a Regional Strategic Plan and then annually review and report the Region's progress in implementing the recommendations of its adopted Plan. The first of such plans was developed and adopted by RADCO (GWRC's predecessor agency) in the fall of 2006, providing the direction for GWRC's reorganization, newly-recruited management team and work program for several subsequent years.

Over the years since the first Plan was adopted, the Region and its local governments have been forced to deal with a national housing and economic recession which has adversely affected local governments' budgets and their financial capacity to fully support the Commission, as well as many other outside governmental and non-profit agencies, while imposing staffing reductions to operate within available budgeted resources. In recent years, these economic challenges have coincided with many new (e.g. new State stormwater management regulations, implementing Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation Plans, and complying with federal narrow-band radio communications policy to name a few) as well as other on-going program challenges (e.g. addressing regional transportation and transit funding and project implementation challenges) which collectively have changed the regional landscape.

In the spring of 2102, the Commission initiated a regional strategic assessment process to determine what direction the local governments, their appointed GWRC representatives and the community at large would like the GWRC to pursue to serve regional interests. The assessment process found that GWRC's work program had become rather narrowly-focused on transportation planning and transportation demand management programs and was not adequately addressing the need to convene regional venues that promote greater regional collaboration on a number of areas of common concern. The assessment process identified the need:

- to gain wider regional stakeholder and public engagement on important regional topics through the formation of regional advisory committees,
- to support local and regional economic development and tourism efforts with data, research and analytical capacity and program coordination,
- to promote rural Broadband Internet solutions, and
- to work with area healthcare providers on a better community healthcare assessment process.

Additionally, GWRC staff identified on-going program responsibilities the Commission has by virtue of recently-adopted regional plans, as well as existing federal and state grant obligations.

This updated Regional Strategic Plan synthesizes the community and Board feedback from the regional strategic assessment process with a staff review of current program and grant obligations to produce a revised Vision statement for the Commission, a statement of core regional values driving and strategic threats that could impede the Commission's realization of the Plan's recommendations; and a revised set of goals, objectives and strategies to cover all the program themes recommended by the GWRC Board and fulfill the Commission's existing programmatic and grant contract commitments.

Vision: *The George Washington Region (and its member localities) will be a high-performing, economically-competitive and attractive Region to both residents and visitors by promoting and supporting intra-regional cooperation in economic and tourism development, environmental management, effective public safety radio communications and Internet access, and affordable housing and coordinated human services for all the citizenry of the Region.*

Following the direction of the Commission, the Plan proposes the establishment of several regional advisory committees (see list on following page) to convene planning meetings to address specific mission statements proposed for each committee. The Commission may need to evaluate whether it needs to prioritize among these programs or to work with local governments and other stakeholders to secure adequate funding, staffing and planning support to develop meaningful regional program recommendations in so many diverse areas.

Proposed New GWRC Advisory Committees

1. Regional Governmental Services Coordination & Integration Committee

Mission: To explore opportunities to regionalize (fully or partially) the delivery of local government services (e.g. emergency services) where cost-savings and service efficiencies may be realized or local program effectiveness may be enhanced through regional cooperative efforts; and identify any legislative, regulatory or administrative impediments to the implementation of any Committee recommendations.

2. Regional Economic Development & Tourism Research Committee

Mission:

- a) Identify information, research and analytical gaps that could be filled to strengthen local and regional economic development and tourism efforts.
- b) Oversee the development or acquisition of regional and local market demographic information to ensure Committee acceptance and use of the information resources.
- c) Identify cost-saving opportunities to improve the cost-effectiveness of existing programs.
- d) Recommend support roles that GWRC could play to address gaps and cost-savings opportunities identified,
- e) Consider the development of regional farmers' market consortium or program to enhance the effectiveness of existing regional farmers' market collaborative.

3. Regional Broadband Service Advisory Committee

Mission: To support the implementation of reasonably-priced Broadband Internet services throughout the Region, particularly in those rural areas which currently lack or have inadequate service.

Maintain Existing Regional Advisory Committees

4. Regional Inter-Operability Emergency Communications Committee

Mission: Promote the exchange of technical and administrative information between first-responders within the Region (and beyond) to help all emergency response units maintain currency on how to communicate with each other on various radio and CADD systems; design and implement cost-effective practices to facilitate better inter-governmental communications in the field; and identify outside resources which the Region can pursue to fill gaps in the Regional inter-operability network.

5. Regional Environmental Stewardship Committee

Mission:

- a) Work to promote inter-governmental collaboration to reduce the overall costs of and improve effectiveness of:
 - i. the implementation of new State stormwater management regulations and fees to promote greater consistency and stormwater management program effect throughout the Region;
 - ii. the selection and implementation of urban and rural BMP strategies to comply with Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals and impaired stream clean-up efforts; and,
 - iii. achieving the regional voluntary conservation easement goal adopted by the Commission in the Regional Green Infrastructure Plan.
- b) Coordinate with Rappahannock River Basin Commission, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, environmental non-government organizations (e.g. Friends of the Rappahannock and others) to avoid duplication of effort and potential intra-regional competition for outside grant resources which may adversely affect the Region's competitive position and Plan implementation.

6. Regional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan Implementation Committee

Mission: Support the implementation of adopted local and regional strategies in the 2012 Regional Hazards Mitigation Plan; and identify and pursue grant resources which can support implementation of local and regional mitigation projects, including (but not limited to) the regional special needs population registry.

Foreword

The Regional Strategic Plan is a living document that reflects the direction given by the GWRC Board of Directors to the GWRC staff on work program content and priorities for pursuing new program roles for the Commission and identifying the resources necessary to undertake these roles to meet the needs of local governments in the Region.

Introduction

The Virginia General Assembly created the statutory framework for the creation of the PDCs in 1968 through the passage of the Virginia Area Development Act. In 1995, the General Assembly modified the Area Development Act through the adoption of the Regional Cooperation Act (i.e. “the Act”, Chapter 42, Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia). The Act clearly articulates that PDCs were created to provide a forum for state and local government to address issues of a regional nature.

Another purpose of PDCs is to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation in addressing, on a regional basis, problems of greater than local significance. This cooperation is intended to help local governments solve their problems by enhancing the ability to recognize and analyze regional opportunities and take account of regional influences in planning and implementing public policies and services.

One important mechanism in helping localities meet these goals is the requirement that each PDC complete a regional strategic plan with participation from local governing bodies, the business community, citizen organizations and other interested parties. The strategic plan is required to include regional goals and objectives, strategies to meet those goals and mechanisms for measuring progress. The intent of the plan is to help promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social, and economic elements of the planning district.

In addition to the strategic planning requirement, the Regional Cooperation Act identifies other duties of the planning district commissions, namely:

- To conduct studies on issues and problems of regional significance;
- To identify and study potential opportunities for cost savings and staffing efficiencies through coordinated local government efforts;
- To identify mechanisms for the coordination of local interests on a regional basis;
- To implement services upon the request of member local governments;
- To provide technical assistance to local governments;
- To serve as a liaison between local governments and state agencies as requested;
- To review local government aid applications as required by applicable state and federal law and regulation;
- To develop regional functional area plans as deemed necessary by the commission or as requested by member local governments;
- To assist state agencies, as requested, in the development of sub-state plans;
- To participate in a statewide geographic information system, the Virginia Geographic Information Network, as directed by the Department of Planning and Budget; and
- To collect and maintain demographic, economic and other data concerning the region and member local governments, and act as a state data center affiliate in cooperation with the Virginia Employment Commission.

Element 1: Strategic Planning

Background

In July of 2004 the Rappahannock Area Development Commission (the predecessor to GWRC) authorized the development of the original Regional Strategic Plan in accordance with Section 15.2-4209 of State Code and directed that the planning process begin as soon as possible. The Commission began the process by reviewing the State Code requirements and other regional strategic plans from across Virginia. The preferred format for the plan and the approach were agreed upon. Each of the ten regional strategic plans reviewed had differences but all followed the Code required theme of goals, objectives and strategies that can be measured.

The Commission then participated in a "regional scan" – reviewing economic and demographic data and planning documents of other organizations in the region. It was agreed that RADCO would not "reinvent the wheel" with this process, but instead would take advantage of the planning work already completed by others. This Commission agreed to use the work of others as a foundation for this plan.

By the Fall of 2004 RADCO began the process of identifying key regional strategic issues. The Commission identified over twenty issues and then distilled and prioritized those issues down to the six key *Strategic Issues* that make up this document. Over two meetings Commission members developed sound consensus on these top six issues. The process then moved to collecting more detailed information and developing the goals, objectives and strategies. The Commission heard presentations from staff and outside experts on several issues including telecommunications, transportation, utilities (water and sewer) and water resources.

Over a series of five meetings the Commission developed the recommended *Goals, Objectives, and Strategies* for RADCO relative to each *Strategic Issue*. The *Responsible Party* for each *Strategy* was also identified. The *Time Frame* for each *Strategy* was established as it was anticipated that this would be completed after receiving comments for the governing bodies of the region.

	Strategic Issues	Objectives	Strategies
1	Facilitating Regional Solutions	3	3
2	Transportation	2	4
3	Infrastructure	2	4
4	Affordable Housing	2	3
5	Workforce Development	1	1
6	Character of the Region	1	2

See Appendix A for details of the first Plan’s goals, objective(s) and strategies summarized above.

The local governments’ ratification of RADCO’s revised charter agreement to form GWRC delayed adoption of the Commission’s Strategic Plan until September 2006. Concurrently with the local government hearings on the revised charter agreement, the Commission undertook the recruitment of a new Executive Director and Directors of Transportation Planning and Regional Planning. GWRC came into existence as of October 1, 2006 to carry-out the recommendations of the Plan through the new senior staff team hired to undertake the Plan’s implementation.

Over the next 2-3 years, several new GWRC initiatives reflected a strong response to the Region’s initial Strategic Plan, including the publication of “The State of the Region” report in 2007, formation of a Regional Affordable Housing Task Force, the GWRC Green Government Commission, the update of the Region’s long-range transportation plan, and other initiatives. By 2008, the Region began to experience a dramatic decline in governmental revenue streams with onset of the economic and housing recession. Local governments’ suffered significant revenue reductions from the decline in development-related revenue

and the decline of property values beginning in 2008 through 2011 which forced significant local and regional budget and staffing cuts.

During this time the Commission was successful in applying for grant funding associated with the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA) of 2008 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. In the first instance, the Commission staff co-authored grant applications to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding, resulting in \$5 million in NSP funds awarded to the Central Virginia Housing Coalition (CVHC) to address the significant growth in home foreclosures in PD 16. In the second instance, the Commission was awarded \$1 million through the Virginia Small Cities' Energy-Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program administered by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, along with a supplemental ARRA compliance grant of \$40,000 to meet the ARRA reporting and accounting requirements. As of July 2012, the NSP program at CVHC is on-going as a result of the revolving loan nature of the program, while the EECBG program is near completion, having spent approximately 83.5% of the grant funds on residential home energy-efficiency projects and local government energy efficiency projects (for the last 15% of funds remaining).

In the Spring of 2011, GWRC lost its first Executive Director and funding constraints impaired the Commission's ability to fill some Regional Planning-related staff positions. The lack of an updated strategic plan and vision from the Board led the incoming Executive Director to recommend to the GWRC Board to undertake a regional strategic assessment to help the Board identify consensus program themes and regional community interest in program direction and support from GWRC.

Regional Strategic Assessment

In the Spring of 2012, the George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) contracted with the Southeast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) to conduct a strategic assessment process of the GWRC and its current and potential role in supporting its member governments and the Commonwealth of Virginia in the enhancement of the City of Fredericksburg, Caroline County, King George County, Spotsylvania County, and Stafford County. The GWRC selected this particular time period to conduct the assessment as it hired a new Executive Director in January 2012 and felt that it was time to assess the current and future direction of the organization as well as provide guidance to the new Executive Director on the thoughts of the membership and the region's leadership.

SERDI was chosen to assist the GWRC in this effort as the Institute is the professional development association for regional council executive directors in the South, and it provides strategic assessment assistance to its member councils upon request. The assessment process consisted of four segments:

- (1) an online survey of the region's leadership
- (2) six focus group sessions with:
 - (a) community economic developers
 - (b) chief administrative officers of the local governments
 - (c) Department of Defense/U.S. Government/Historic Partners
 - (d) major regional employers
 - (e) transportation/environmental/public safety; and,
 - (f) GWRC staff.
- (3) GWRC Board of Directors work session; and,
- (4) the complete record report.

Strategic Assessment Findings

The SERDI study team found that the GWRC has a much narrower-focused work program than most regional councils in Virginia, the South, and the Nation. Most of its focus is on transportation with other activities such as planning, data, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) work supporting transportation activities.

Those regional leaders completing the online strategic assessment survey and the focus group sessions generally gave the GWRC positive marks. There is a desire to have the GWRC play a “Convener Role,” a place where the public leadership and interests can come together to discuss, consider, and take action on challenges, issues, and opportunities facing the Region. The staff and Board need to be more engaged with the member governments and other regional partners.

While transportation is an extremely important challenge for the region, participants cited environmental concerns, public safety and emergency management, tourism, and an enhanced data and analysis offering as opportunities that GWRC should seek, provide, and/or offer support in to enhance the quality of place that is, the George Washington region. The concerns voiced by assessment participants focused on relevancy and lack of “regional” engagement by local governments in the five jurisdictions, often spending most of their time focused on their own local government’s/community’s issues and agenda.

The GWRC Board of Directors reacted favorably to the survey and focus group work. Several cited that the desired role for GWRC by those participants was 180 degrees (for the most part) from the current focus of the GWRC staff. From the Board’s perspective, there is too much focus on staff trying to find programs with funding to keep their employment and the light bill paid, instead of focusing in on the needs of the five communities that could help make the region more prosperous and address its challenges and opportunities. The Board agreed that the GWRC needs to play more of a convener role and focus in on supporting their governments, their communities and the region as a whole. Further they acknowledged that this may take more of a financial commitment of the member governments to their regional commission.

Based on their review of the findings and discussion at the work session, the Board of Directors developed a number of internal and external recommendations and requested that GWRC Executive Director move forward on them with the Board as well as with chief administrative officers of the five GWRC local governments as follows:

- **Regional Cooperative Efforts on behalf of Member Governments.** With tight economic times and shrinking resources, the Board of Directors suggested that there should be consideration and review given to the areas in which local government might be able to pool their financial resources through the GWRC to provide staffing/expertise that they may not be able to afford individually or might make more sense to fund regionally. They asked the GWRC Executive Director to meet with the chief administrative officers of the five member governments to explain the Board’s thinking on developing a regional menu of services that might include such shared service expertises as regional radio dispatch and communication; roving civil engineer or other professionals that could support the governments road departments; water and other environmental specialist; support for fire and police; purchasing; and, park & recreation.

The Board wanted to make it clear that they were not trying to diminish the CAO’s or local governments’ authority but, were only trying to focus on possible ways that local governments could use *their regional commission* to economically address some functions that would make sense to finance regionally.

- **Regional Programmatic Focus.** While it is understood that the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and GWRC (that addresses rural transportation planning and coordinates regional rideshare and vanpool programs through GW RideConnect) address transportation as a very important regional issue that needs to be supported and enhanced whenever possible; the Board of Directors identified a number of other potential areas where the GWRC should consider focusing in the future. Those areas include, but are not limited to:

1. Economic Development
2. Broadband
3. Tourism; and,
4. Health Care.

With regard to Economic Development, there is a general consensus that GWRC does not need to hire an economic development professional or get into the recruitment game. Each of the five member governments employs an economic development professional. In addition, the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance offers a region-wide economic development marketing and recruitment tool. Where the GWRC can be of great assistance and where increased efforts should be placed is in a support role to the established economic development professionals in the area of data, research, and analysis. The GWRC can also act as the convening point for the region's economic professionals to meet on a regular basis to share concerns and opportunities.

Broadband access continues to be a challenge in the rural portions of the region. The GWRC should play a support role in identifying ways that can expedite its establishment throughout the area. The GWRC Executive Director needs to contact colleagues in Maryland to learn how the regional councils have been involved in bringing Broadband to rural areas of Maryland.

While each community has its own tourism staff, participants voiced a real interest in promoting and celebrating the great tourism potential that exists for the region. It is felt that a way to maximize that potential would be to create a regional tourism roundtable/collaborative with GWRC staffing where and if appropriate for the region's tourism professionals.

One of a community's (local and regional) most important assets or deficits is its Health Care network. Where it is an asset, it can always be enhanced. Where it is a deficit, a community must strive to take steps to improve it. It is not only important for its current residents, but it is a key component in successfully attracting others and jobs to a region. It was suggested that the GWRC should partner with the various Health Care interests to develop an assessment tool of the Health Care assets of the region, by community and as a whole, as well as the deficits and needs by program, health care professionals, facilities etc. The GWRC can also host/convene the region's health care professionals in roundtables to discuss the opportunities, challenges, and issues affecting the industry in the region with particular emphasis on their working relationship with government leaders and their communities.

- **Governance Structure Consideration.** The assessment process addressed three issues regarding the GWRC governance structure: (1) Board of Directors, (2) broad regional involvement, and (3) current/future program structures.

The participants in the assessment process thought that the private sector, citizens, and other public leaders should be more involved by expanding the Board of Directors or, by creating advisory councils/committees that could support and be formally connected to the current Board of Directors structure. There was concern expressed by the Board of Directors regarding a program, i.e. the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO), driving the GWRC.

Upon a detailed discussion regarding the structure of the Board of Directors, it was the decision of the Board to keep the current structure of two elected officials from each of the five member governments. However, the Board of Directors will move forward in developing an advisory council/committee structure that will allow for broad regional involvement by both public (appointed and elected) and private sector leaders as well as citizens from the region. The Board will work to define the committee structure that supports the *new* broad focus of the GWRC.

Furthermore, the Board of Directors felt that the focus of the GWRC needs to be first and foremost the region, and the local governments and communities that make up the region. Therefore, with a desire

to have a broader convening focus for GWRC, the GWRC should hold its Board of Directors meetings at a separate time and date from any current or future program or focus area that the GWRC administers programmatically, or in a staffing role, or as a fiscal agent. This action addresses the FAMPO meeting, which has been occurring directly following the GWRC Board meeting. The GWRC is the fiscal agent for the MPO program and employs the MPO program staff. Its interaction with the GWRC Board of Directors should be annually in the formal adoption of the staffing contract and any other formal action that the GWRC may have to take as the fiscal agent for the program. It is important that FAMPO remain a viable program of the GWRC as it serves portions of three of the five member governments. The staff also serves as the rural transportation planning staff for the rural portions of the GW region.

It was the further recommendation of the Board of Directors that the formal advisory councils/committees that are formed as part of the GWRC governance structure be staffed collaboratively by the GWRC and applicable staff from other local, regional, and if appropriate, state staff. It is unclear whether the GWRC members that advocate the use of formal advisory committees understand and are willing to accept and provide funding to support the implied administrative cost to comply with Virginia's public meeting notice, minute taking and other responsibilities of a governmental body to ensure public participation.

- **Current Programs, FY 13-14:**

In addition to new program initiatives recommended through the Strategic Assessment process, the Commission has on-going programmatic commitments to local governments, the State and Federal Governments by virtue of on-going planning grants, as well as regionally-endorsed and locally-adopted plans.

(1) Regional Planning Grant (DHCD)

Under the annual regional planning support grant from the Virginia General Assembly passed through the Virginia Dept of Housing and Community Development, the Commission is obligated to:

- a) fulfill its general duties as defined under the Regional Cooperation Act,
- b) provide annual reports to DHCD (for reporting to the General Assembly) on the Commission's progress in implementing or reviewing and revising its Strategic Plan developed under the Act,
- c) provide an annual set of regional priorities for DHCD's annual Community Development Block Grant program and determine which communities, if any, are applying for a CDBG grant; and
- d) serve on the project management committee formed for any active Community Development Block Grant program grant (i.e. either for Planning or Community Improvement) awarded by DHCD.
- e) serve the Planning District as an affiliate State Data Center, making census and other federal and state data available, and provide review comments to the Virginia Employment Commission (and its contractors) regarding revised local population projections.

(2) Homeless Management Information System (HUD)

The Commission is the annual recipient of the Homeless Management Information System grant from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development on behalf of the Regional Continuum of Care which supports the implementation of the City's Consolidated Housing Plan. This grant serves local homeless shelter operators by providing the database system that fulfills federal and State reporting requirements for various shelter and human services programs supported through federal and state grants. Moreover, the Commission, serving as HMIS Lead Agency for the Fredericksburg Area Continuum of Care, takes on broader coordinative and data quality standards

enforcement responsibility under the federal HEARTH Act and the proposed federal regulations promulgated thereunder¹.

(3) Coastal Zone Management Program (VDEQ & NOAA)

As one of the eight PDCs in Virginia's coastal zone, GWRC's Director of Regional Planning participates on Virginia's Coastal Policy team to provide a voice for PD 16 local governments in coastal zone management (CZM) program discussions on the use priorities for federal CZM funds awarded to Virginia. Each of the eight PDCs receives annual technical assistance funding from the Commonwealth's federal CZM grant to support local government interests in coastal issues. For FY 2012-2013, member localities have asked the Commission through local technical staff to help local governments and other stakeholders work together in developing a regional response to the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation Planning effort. This activity has been proposed by GWRC staff as the continuing focus of the grant-support activity for FY 2013-2014 with special focus on helping Caroline County document the location and condition of all urban stormwater best management practices (BMPs) implemented by existing development and develop an automated tracking system to better manage this water quality infrastructure.

(4) Regional Stormwater Management Implementation Support (VDCR & VDEQ)

The Commission received a grant to support local governments' development of local stormwater management ordinances and stormwater programs for implementation by July 2104 as required by the Virginia Stormwater Act and related regulations.

(5) Regional Emergency Communication Inter-Operability Planning (Local)

The adopted regional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan recommends the Commission's on-going support of regional emergency communications inter-operability coordination as strategy to strengthen the Region's hazards mitigation effort. The Commission hosts regular meetings of this regional committee and has initiated a survey to identify the communications infrastructure and networks used by all five member governments and the adjoining localities. The goal of the survey is to develop a cross-reference communications table to serve as an aid to emergency/public safety crews responding to mutual aid calls outside their home locality.

(6) Regional Farmers' Market Promotion Program (VDACS & USDA)

The Commission currently serves as the applicant for and fiscal agent of federal (USDA) and state (VDACS) grant funds to support the informally-organized regional farmers market cooperative marketing group that is promoting increased public awareness and use of the local farmers' markets that provide an outlet for fresh, locally-grown produce (i.e. fruits and vegetables) and farm products. In summer of 2012 and 2013, the growing momentum of public awareness of these markets has significantly increased GWRC's fiscal agent role over a growing sales volume at all these markets, leveraged by some incentive funds awarded by public and private grant funds. The Farmers' Market advocates in the Region would like to see the Commission to play a larger role as a convenor of regional food systems organizations to enhance the economic and community health impacts of a robust community food program and leverage access to other federal and private foundation grant programs intended to promote healthy communities.

(7) Regional Transportation Planning (FHWA & VDOT)

The Commission currently provides staff and fiscal agency support to the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to fulfill federal urban transportation planning and

¹ 24 CFR Parts 91, 576, 580, and 583, Homeless Management Information Systems Requirements, subpart B: Responsibilities for HMIS Administration (§ 580.5)

programming requirements. Moreover, the Commission receives a rural transportation planning grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation, which grant supports the coordination of rural transportation planning with urban transportation programs.

(8) Regional Transportation Demand Management (FHWA & VDRPT)

The Commission, through the GWRideConnect program, provides transportation demand management services, including the provision of a car, vanpool and transit matching service, transit information, vanpool start up subsidies for vanpool operators, commuter parking lot leasing,, management of a Statewide vanpool self-insurance pool program, employer and realtor outreach, extensive marketing of the GWRideConnect program and its services. GWRideconnect assists the existing 400 vanpools in the region and helps to form new vanpools. The region has the largest fleet of vanpools in the State of Virginia. The program coordinates with TDM agencies in Northern Virginia and works with VDOT and DRPT to implement transportation management techniques during construction phases on major highways.. GWRideConnect is a member of Commuter Connections.

Methodology

Following up on the SERDI regional strategic assessment process, GWRC discussed the recommendations of the Strategic Assessment report and GWRC's Board direction with local government chief administrative officers, senior local government staff and other key stakeholders in the Region. These meetings involved the following partners, organized by the topics recommended by the GWRC Board:

1. Economic Development
 - Local economic development directors and economic development authorities
 - Fredericksburg Regional Alliance
 - Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce
 - Caroline County Chamber of Commerce
 - Local utility companies
 - University of Mary Washington Economic Development and Regional Engagement
 - Rappahannock Economic Development Corporation (REDCO 501)
 - Virginia Employment Commission
2. Tourism
 - Fredericksburg Regional Tourism Partnership
 - Fredericksburg Hospitality Association
 - National Park Service
 - Local economic development directors and economic development authorities
3. Broadband
 - Telecommunications & Broadband group, Va. Dept. of Housing & Community Development
 - Fredericksburg Regional Technology Council
 - Local Internet service providers
 - Local economic development directors in rural areas of the region
4. Health Care
 - Rappahannock Health District
 - Mary Washington Hospital & Mary Washington Health Care Foundation
 - HCA's, Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center
 - MediCorp Health System's Stafford Hospital Center
 - Directors of Departments of Social Services

- Rappahannock Community Service Board
- Stakeholder & advocacy groups:
 - Local licensed health care professionals
 - Major area employers

Key Findings: Strategic Assessment Process Results

1. Facilitating Regional Solutions

- a) The GWRC Board concluded that GWRC needed to address several governance issues, namely:
 - i. Board of Directors. The GWRC Board needs to arrange for meeting at a separate time from any other program-related meetings to provide adequate time to focus on, deliberate over and make regional recommendations on topics of regional significance
 - ii. Broader regional involvement. Rather than expanding the Commission’s existing membership structure, the GWRC Board needs to engage broader community representation through the formation of topic-specific advisory committees to provide the Commission and its staff broader input of public, private and non-profit perspectives addressed by said advisory committees.
 - iii. Current/future program structures. GWRC staffing support to the advisory committees to be formed by GWRC should be supplemented by local government and, in some instances, state agency staff.

- b) The GWRC Board of Directors suggested that there should be consideration and review given to the areas in which local government might be able to pool their financial resources through the GWRC to provide staffing/expertise that they may not be able to afford individually or might make more sense to fund regionally.

2. Enhancing Targeted Program Effectiveness

- a) **Economic Development**
 - i. The Commission should support the established economic development professionals in the area with enhanced data, research, and economic analysis.
 - ii. The Commission should provide a convening point for the region’s economic development professionals to meet on a regular basis to share concerns and opportunities.
 - iii. The Commission should work with local informal farmers’ market collaborative to document the economic (and other) benefits of a robust regional farmers market network.

- b) **Tourism**
 - i. The Commission should play a support role to the established tourism professionals and visitor attraction operators (public and private) in the area of research, analysis and marketing program coordination.
 - ii. The Commission should provide a convening point for the region’s tourism professionals and visitor attraction operators (public and private) to meet on a regular basis to share concerns and opportunities.

- c) **Broadband & Inter-Operability Emergency Communications**
 - i. The Commission should play a support role in identifying ways that can expedite the establishment and extension of broadband Internet access throughout the Region in general and the rural area in particular

- ii. The Commission should play a support role to on-going inter-governmental efforts to foster efficient and effective inter-operability radio communications among first-responders, dispatchers and other public safety entities to enhance response times, increase response effectiveness and improve public safety in the Region.

d) Health Care

- i. GWRC should partner with the various regional Health Care interests to develop an assessment tool of the Health Care assets of the Region, by community and as a whole, as well as the deficits and needs by program, health care professionals, facilities etc.
- ii. The GWRC could host/convene the region's health care professionals in roundtables to discuss the opportunities, challenges, and issues affecting the industry in the Region with particular emphasis on their working relationship with government leaders and their communities.

e) Environment

- i. The Commission should convene meetings among local governments and other stakeholders and VDCR, VDOF and VDACS to encourage and support working together in developing a regional response to the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation effort.
- ii. The Commission should collaborate with the Rappahannock River Basin Commission and adjoining Planning District Commissions in inter-regional coordination of regional and local programs and training initiatives to enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of local environmental program implementation.
- iii. The Commission should work with both Soil and Water Conservation District Boards and their staffs to enhance the effectiveness of these organizations in supporting local governments' environmental management and water quality improvement programs.

f) Continuum of Care, Affordable Housing & Community Development

- i. The Commission should fulfill its responsibilities as the COC-designated HMIS lead agency to support all homeless shelter providers in the successful use of a HUD-certified HMIS system used to track and report the homeless clients serviced by the local shelters and the community-based services which they receive in order to ensure the annual renewal of the HUD HMIS grant that significantly subsidizes local compliance with this federal mandate.
- ii. The Commission (and its local governments) should promote wider adoption of the COC-endorsed HMIS by non-profit human service agencies that receive local government funding support by requiring adoption of the HMIS as a condition of local funding award.
- iii. The Commission should continue to participate in and support the Region's affordable housing effort led by the regional realtors association.
- iv. The Commission should continue to support communities in the Region pursuing Community Development grants for the benefit of the local community served by these projects.

g) Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation

- i. The Commission should address in an annual work program commitment the regional hazard mitigation program strategy recommendations of the recently-adopted 2012 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- ii. The Commission should work with local disability organizations, local health care sector representatives and FAMPO to explore the availability of grant funding to undertake the design, development and maintenance of a special needs population registry that would serve local first responders, utilities and disability organizations with an accurate inventory of persons with chronic health conditions which require regular power to operate life-

supporting medical equipment and/or accessibility to medical care providers for chronic medical treatment or emergency care.

3. Strategic Threats

The Region has many assets, yet faces many external and internal challenges to be met by the Commission in undertaking its mission and achieving the common vision for the Region. These challenges, or “strategic threats” are seen to be:

- a) The federal government budget crisis and the budget sequestration process has had adverse impact directly on the Region’s employment base and gross regional income from salaries, wages and contract sales directly and indirectly related to the federal government budget. Moreover, the secondary indirect impact on the Virginia economy and State government budget could have additional negative consequences for local governments.
- b) State government budget problems and political reluctance to address many "unfunded mandates" that impose burdens on local governments to comply with State mandates.
- c) Continued national, State and regional economic malaise which discourages private equity holders from investing in new housing, business expansion and job growth initiatives.
- d) Federal and State environmental mandates directly or indirectly addressing and requiring costly clean-up efforts of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; as well as national, state and local air quality.
- e) The aging of the Region’s work force, creating a potential “brain drain” of institutional intelligence in both the public and private sectors resulting from retiring middle and upper management personnel that have sustained existing public and private business activity through the challenges of the recent economic recession and ever-growing local, state, regional, national and global competition.
- f) The aging of the Region’s general population, increasing demand for technology- and personal care assistance for persons with higher rates of disability for Activities of Daily Living and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living.
- g) The erosion of household net worth resulting from housing recession and negative impact on homeownership equity for those wanting or needing higher cost long-term care.

4. Strategic Plan Highlights

Vision

The George Washington Region (and its member localities) will be a high performing, economically-competitive and attractive Region to both residents and visitors by promoting and supporting intra-regional cooperation in economic and tourism development, environmental management, effective public safety radio communications and Internet access, and affordable housing and coordinated human services for all the citizenry of the Region.

Mission

As the Regional Planning District Commission, GWRC's mission is to coordinate planning to ensure economic competitiveness, reduce redundancy in government, improve efficiency, enhance services and improve implementation time of regional projects.

Statement of Core Regional Values

The Region values:

1. The preservation and enhancement of the quality of life and natural landscape of the George Washington Region.
2. The protection and enhancement of the natural resources (air and water) that sustain life and contribute to the well-being of the citizenry of the Region (see Article 11, Virginia Constitution).
3. The promotion of the economic prosperity of and economic opportunity for the residents of the Region.
4. The protection of individual values, opportunities and rights to respect individual freedoms guaranteed by our Nation's and State's Constitutions.
5. The recognition and preservation, to the maximum practical extent, of the significant historic and cultural resources which reflect the foundation of and traditions cherished by our modern society.
6. The Region values cost-effective and efficient administration of government at all levels and the delivery of high quality government services to the residents of the Region.
7. The enhancement of transportation and other public infrastructure and services necessary to meet the current and future needs of the Region's population and to sustain and promote the economic well-being and the quality of life of the residents of the Region.

Element #2: Duties Performed

Provide a concise description of all activities accomplished pursuant to the duties assigned (enumerated below) under the Regional Cooperation Act.

GWRC Accomplishments in FY 2012-2013

In compliance with the requirements of the Commission under the Regional Cooperation Act, these mandatory updates on the Commission's accomplishments over the last fiscal year are provided to assist DHCD's Commission on Local Government staff in compiling the statewide report to the General Assembly on the efforts and results of PDCs throughout the Commonwealth.

A. Conduct studies with regional significance (initiated and/or completed).

1. GWRC initiated 5 new regional strategic programs and provided periodic progress reports to the Commission on the following topics:
 - a) Regional Emergency Management/Public Safety Services Coordination:
 - b) Regional Study of Locally-Funded Agencies and Programs
 - c) Regional Rural Broadband Planning and Development
 - d) Regional Economic Development and Tourism Information & Coordination
 - e) Peer Economic Region Identification Study
2. GWRC worked with local governments to support local compliance with the implementation of the Virginia Stormwater Management Regulations.

3. FAMPO completed the update of the 2035 LRTP by adopting the 2040 LRTP.
4. The FAMPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 were developed and adopted.
5. FAMPO amended the FY 2012-2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to reflect changes in projects and Federal funding obligations.
6. Continued maintenance and enhancement of regional homeless management information system to be used by homeless shelter providers in serving the disadvantaged and homeless population in the Region.

B. Identify and study opportunities for local cost savings and staff efficiencies through coordinated local efforts.

1. Through GWRC's regional strategic assessment process, the Commission directed staff to explore opportunities for local cost savings and staff efficiencies through coordinated local efforts, resulting in the five initiatives discussed above under A1 above.
2. GWRC acted as administrative and support staff and fiscal agent for several groups and agencies such as the Rappahannock Economic Development Corporation, Rappahannock River Basin Commission.
3. GWRC operated a regional transportation demand management program through GWRideConnect and provided individualized assistance to over 4,000 residents, 400 vanpool operators and public and private transit providers. GWRideConnect provided van start-up subsidy for new vanpools operating in the Region, as well as a van-save program for vanpool programs in jeopardy of terminating operations.. The Advantage self-insurance program saved vanpool operators thousands of dollars this year and provided them with more limited liability coverage than traditional insurance.
4. GWRC provided mapping services for several regional agencies, especially those that provide transportation services, in order to assist in providing more effective routing and transport for their clients.

C. Identify mechanisms for coordinating local interests on a regional basis.

1. Through GWRC's regional strategic assessment process, the Commission directed staff to broaden community participation and stakeholder involvement in the planning affairs of the Commission. Consequently, the revised Strategic Plan proposes to maintain existing and establish a variety of regional advisory committees to gather community and stakeholder input.
2. The GWRC Executive Director and Directors of Regional and Transportation Planning meet monthly with the City Manager and the four County Administrators, Bowling Green Town Manager and key deputy managers in PD 16. The regional Health District Director and President of Germanna Community College joined the group in FY2011. GWRC staff also meet occasionally with the Directors of Social Services and the Public Works Directors to discuss local matters that may be addressed on a regional basis.
3. GWRC Regional Planning Director and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Coordinator regularly attend monthly regional Continuum of Care meetings with local human service providers, faith-based community leaders, local government human service and non-profit organization staff to ensure coordination of the regional HMIS implementation with the human services delivery community. GWRC's Regional Planning Director was voted to serve on the Fredericksburg Regional COC Executive Committee.
4. Regional transportation planning efforts undertaken by FAMPO (through staff support from GWRC) involve local staff representatives on the FAMPO Technical Advisory Committee, special corridor and interchange project advisory committees and the FAMPO Board itself, composed of local elected officials and managers from Fredericksburg, Stafford and Spotsylvania as voting members, as well as elected officials from Caroline and King George in an observer, non-voting capacity. GWRC also has a voting representative on the Public Transportation Advisory Board for the Fredericksburg Regional Transit System (FRED).

5. GWRC staff and Commission members serve on many committees created by localities for various projects and provide coordination among these groups. GWRC staff serves on many committees created by other regional organizations. Staff provides a coordinating function as input is provided to these many committees.
6. Local staff and officials bring various issues to the George Washington Regional Commission and FAMPO meetings for regional coordination and discussion.
7. GWRC staff members serve as staff to a number of regional agencies; consequently, coordination occurs at many levels and across a number of different programs. For example, GWRC staff was invited to serve on Mary Washington Hospital's Community Needs Assessment Steering Committee to support areawide health needs assessment and various members serve various planning committees formed by U.S. Marine Corps Base-Quantico.
8. GWRC staff meets with State agency personnel to discuss local and regional issues that are impacted by the State. Staff also meets with representatives from other regions when necessary to express the views of our localities and our region. GWRC and FAMPO staff work with other regional and state-level groups such as the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC), the Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO), the Coastal PDC-CZM committee, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Coastal Policy Team.
9. Each year, GWRC and its localities develop a Legislative Program to identify issues of importance to the Region and then present these issues to our State legislators. This helps both the State and local officials focus attention on items of greatest priority to the region. Other localities from outside our region join in the exercise.
10. The GWRC Executive Director meets with all elected officials and chief administrative officers on a regular basis to guide and participate in discussion of issues of importance in the region.
11. The GWRC coordinates periodic regional issues meetings for local elected officials as well as activities with other regional agencies and organizations.

D. Implement services upon request of local governments.

1. The Commission, through its GWRideConnect program, leased 130 parking spaces from private property owners to provide commuters with commuter parking where it was not available in the region. This assisted commuters wanting to carpool and vanpool for longer work-trip commutes to the Richmond and Washington DC metro areas.
2. On behalf of Regional Continuum of Care, successfully applied for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Supportive Housing Program- Homeless Management Information System renewal grant to sustain and expand local use of HMIS by local shelters and other supportive service agencies.
3. FAMPO Administrator has served as Interim Executive Director of the George Washington Toll Road Authority formed in 2010 after enabling legislation passed the General Assembly and local resolutions to create the Authority and appoint local representatives was approved.

E. Provide technical assistance to local governments.

1. GWRC assisted the Towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal in the application for and implementation of community development block grant program planning grants. At the request of the Town of Bowling Green, the Commission prepared a market study for a proposed assisted living facility to be located in the Town. For Port Royal, the Commission provided staff and consultant coordination to produce a Preliminary Engineering Report and other required deliverables associated with CDBG planning grant to study the replacement of the obsolete Town water storage tower and upgrade of all Town water distribution lines.
2. For Caroline County, the Commission produced a GIS layer depicting the County's adopted Resource Protection Area defined under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. For the Town of Bowling Green, the Commission provided an updated zoning map of the Town.

3. For Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties and the City of Fredericksburg, Commission staff provided periodic demographic and economic data to respond to research requests prompted by County department or economic development prospect inquiries.

F. Serve as liaison between local governments and state agencies as requested.

1. The Commission worked under a grant from DCR to coordinate the local development of local stormwater management ordinances necessary to comply with the Virginia Stormwater Act and related regulations.
2. The Commission continues to work with DRPT and the Division of Risk Management to manage the statewide Advantage vanpool self-insurance program to support regional and local TDM objectives.

G. Review local government aid applications.

1. Absent a regional comprehensive plan, GWRC has no policy framework upon which to evaluate program and project grant applications. Consequently, this activity is not a part of the GWRC program.
2. GWRC reviews and comments on grant applications, draft local plans and/or development applications at the voluntary request of our local governments.
3. The Commission continues to serve on local project management committee on any planning grant application submitted to DHCD.

H. Develop regional functional plans upon request.

1. GWRC initiated 5 new regional strategic programs and provided periodic progress reports to the Commission on the following topics which are intended to lead to functional plans to guide local actions.
 - a) Regional Emergency Management/Public Safety Services Coordination:
 - b) Regional Study of Locally-Funded Agencies and Programs
 - c) Regional Rural Broadband Planning and Development
 - d) Regional Economic Development and Tourism Information & Coordination
 - e) Peer Economic Region Identification Study

I. Assist state agencies, upon request, in developing sub-state plans.

1. Commission staff work with State agencies on request.

J. Participate in statewide geographic information system.

1. The Commission maintains its affiliation with the Virginia Geographic Information Network (VGIN) and archives updated road centerline files.
2. The Commission also maintains a regional geographic information system technical committee to facilitate the exchange of technical expertise and datasets within the Region.
3. Under the regional Hazards Mitigation Plan, the Commission maintains a regional library of locally-updated spatial datasets important to planning and coordinating State and local emergency response efforts.
4. GWRC supports Departments of Geography and Environmental Science faculty and students at University of Mary Washington by providing GIS-related work internships and referral to various community project opportunities for GIS-certificate candidates.

K. Serve as a state data center affiliate and collect and maintain demographic, economic, and related data for the region and member governments.

1. The Commission maintains a public and private file transfer protocol (FTP) site for efficiently receiving and sharing data files and reports with local governments and the general public.

Element #3: Successes and achievements of special note with regional efforts in cooperation.

List these highlights in order of their importance to your PDC/region and keep in mind that one highlight from each PDC will be selected for inclusion in the biennial report on PDCs that is submitted to the Governor and General Assembly.

Highlight #1: Completion of Regional Strategic Assessment Process

This strategic planning process provided guidance to Executive Director and new members of the Commission Board in determining the program direction which the Commission should take and the programs important to local government and other stakeholders in the Region. Process resulted in the Commission prioritizing programs to address areas of greatest regional need.

Highlight #2: Coordination of Regional Stormwater Management Programs

The Commission organized local governments to work together in review of options to develop or enhance local stormwater management programs and explain proposed changes to development processes to regional stakeholders (i.e. development and engineering community, landscape architects, site planners, realtors, etc.). Work is on-going in FY 13-14.

Highlight #3: Adoption of Regional Long-Range Constrained Transportation Plan

The Commission, and its partner policy Board, FAMPO, adopted the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan, updating the 2035 Plan and continuing the development of a regional transportation planning process which integrates transportation and land use planning.

Updated Regional Strategic Plan: Goals, Objectives & Strategies (By Strategic Issue)

1. Facilitating Regional Solutions

a) Governance issues

Goal #1: To improve the ability of the region's governing bodies and other regional stakeholders to make policy decisions in the face of the many challenges and constant change that is occurring in and around the Region.

Objective #1: Develop the information needed to understand the demographic changes occurring in the Region, the trends and the impacts of those changes on local government policies and services.

Strategy #1: Prepare an annual report (and/or other information products) on the demographic and economic changes occurring in the region, including identification of the internal and those external forces that influence the changes.

Goal #2: To improve the Commission's capacity to address issues of regional significance.

Objective #1: Establish a GWRC meeting schedule that provides elected officials ample time to discuss topics of regional concern, to hear from State agency representatives regarding State programs and policies impacting the Region, and opportunity to formulate a regional initiative (e.g. legislative, programmatic, or public outreach campaigns) to advance regional interests.

Strategy #1: Work with local government managers and administrators to identify an alternate GWRC meeting schedule that complements local meeting schedules while advancing regional cooperation opportunities.

Objective #2: Facilitate planning and policy discussions between policy makers and regional stakeholders.

Strategy #1: Provide an informational briefing at each GWRC meeting on a topic of regional interest related to local programs targeted by the Commission.

b) Coordinated Cost-Efficient Local Government Services

Goal #3: To support local governments' efforts to provide cost-effective, high-quality public service to the residents of the Region.

Objective #1: Identify opportunities and potential regional approaches to policy, infrastructure and service issues facing the Region that can be used as a resource for local decision making regarding the potential support for regionally-significant public infrastructure projects and regionalization of selected public services.

Strategy #1: Discuss with local government managers and administrators the potential for consolidation of common local programs and local cost-sharing in the funding and operation of services which could be more efficiently delivered on a regional basis.

Strategy #2: Research examples and develop a list of "best practices" in Virginia and other states for regional solutions to issues faced by all localities in the region, including opportunities for revenue sharing, public-private partnerships, and jointly provided facilities and services.

2. Enhancing Targeted Program Effectiveness

a) Economic Development

Goal #4: To enhance the effectiveness and positive outcomes of local and regional economic development efforts.

Objective #1: Find cost-effective approaches to share better information, research and analytical capacity that will strengthen all economic development efforts in the Region.

Strategy #1: The Commission should support the established economic development professionals in the area with enhanced data, research, and economic analysis.

Objective #2: Foster cooperation among the actors in the highly-competitive arena of economic development.

Strategy #1: The Commission should provide a convening point for the region's economic development professionals to meet on a regular basis to share concerns and opportunities.

Strategy #2: Encourage regional, local and academic interests to coordinate advertising themes and placements to enhance the Region's visibility and avoid competing placement of advertising and marketing efforts in common publications, trade shows or other marketing initiatives.

Objective #3: Promote local small business development (including rural agrarian business interests) to help enhance local economic opportunity for existing businesses in the Region.

Strategy #1: Invite local and regional chambers of commerce, Farm Bureau and other economic development interests, both urban and rural, to convene a regional local business development summit to identify what support existing business interests would like to see in the Region.

Strategy #2: The Commission should work with local informal farmers' market collaborative to document the economic (and other) benefits of a robust regional farmers market network and support the establishment of local farmers markets where there is demonstrated local interest.

b) Tourism

Goal #5: Increase the collaboration and coordination between public (Federal, State and Local government) and private interests promoting tourism opportunities and experiences in the Region.

Objective #1: Increase rural and urban, public and private tourism promotion coordination.

Strategy #1: Organize a regional tourism round-table to convene quarterly and share information on future near-term and long-range event planning to avoid scheduling conflicts for events in the Region and to identify opportunities for coordinated media buys and placements, sharing tourism traffic to expand the visitors' experience with and enjoyment of the Region's assets.

Strategy #2: Develop a regional on-line calendar for local tourism agency and attraction site operators to view up-coming events and post announcements of special promotions or other incentives of interest to the travelling public.

c) Broadband Internet Service & Inter-Operability Emergency Communications

RE: Broadband

Goal #6: To expand the availability of public Internet broadband service in the Region, particularly in rural areas, with public Wi-Fi or other appropriate technologies.

Objective #1: Encourage private Internet service providers to provide viable service proposals and implementation plans leading to reasonably-priced Internet service for homeowners and businesses throughout the Region.

Strategy #1: Work with FredTech and through local public schools, local tax or utility offices to send out a broad invitation for householders and businesses to participate in regional market survey to identify areas of un-served and under-served households that want hi-speed, reliable access to the Internet. Bundle the results of this survey with a regional RFP for Internet service vendors to provide solution proposals to meet the expressed market demand.

Strategy #2: Consult with DHCD's CDBG program and work with eligible localities to sponsor a CDBG planning grant application to underwrite some of the system planning and market research costs to attract viable private sector proposals.

RE: Inter-Operability Emergency Communications

Goal #7: Improve emergency first-responders' communications inter-operability by the most cost-effective means.

Objective #1: Improve the effectiveness of Inter-operability communications committee meetings.

Strategy #1: Continue to provide a meeting venue and staff support for the regional inter-operability communications committee.

Strategy #2: Work with Committee members to finish the development of Charter and Bylaws for presentation to the GWRC for endorsement and recommendation to local governments.

Strategy #3: Develop and implement pilot projects that help improve inter-operability communications in low-cost ways, and prepare for impact of decisions faced by some member localities as they deliberate over major investments in communications systems upgrades to comply with FCC requirements.

d) Health Care

Goal #8: Support the health care industry's efforts to improve community public health and promote greater coordination of health services to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs of healthcare.

Objective #1: Understand how the health care system of the Region performs, and the general state of public health in the Region.

Strategy #1: GWRC should partner with the various Health Care interests (e.g. Mary Washington Healthcare, HCA, RRCSB and the Rappahannock Health District) to develop an assessment tool (or process) of the Health Care assets of the Region, by community and as a whole, as well as the deficits and needs by program, health care professionals, facilities etc.

Strategy #2: The GWRC could host/convene the region's health care professionals in roundtables to discuss the opportunities, challenges, and issues affecting the industry in the Region with particular emphasis on their working relationship with government leaders and their communities.

e) Environment

Goal #9: Support local government and SWCD efforts to manage existing land uses and the impacts of future land development and/or conversion of existing land use, and agrarian farm operations in a manner that restores the water quality of Region's impaired streams and water bodies, meets federal surface water quality standards and ameliorates the Region's air quality.

Objective #1: Support local government efforts to find cost-effective and efficient means to reverse the adverse water quality impact of existing development on the Region's tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.

Strategy #1: Continue to convene a regional TMDL/WIP planning committee to share information on federal and state programs and regional and industry responses to these programs; new policies, regulations and technologies and best management practices for

low-impact development and green infrastructure practices that can have the greatest impact on meeting nutrient and sediment TMDLS assigned to each locality.

Strategy #2: Host a joint meeting of GWRC elected officials with elected officials serving on the Tri-County/City and Hanover-Caroline SWCD boards to discuss what type and how inter-agency coordination and collaboration could be mutually beneficial to the respective missions of all agencies and support our mutual local government members.

Strategy #3: Review recommendations of regionally-adopted Green Infrastructure Plan and regional legislative needs recommendations submitted to VDCR for WIP Phase II to highlight priority legislative initiatives for regional endorsement to be included in legislative agenda for 2013 General Assembly consideration.

Strategy #4: Explore potential for cost-sharing among MS4 programs on regional water-quality advertising campaign(s) to have greater areawide impact on common BMP practices promoted by all local water quality program.

Strategy #5: Explore opportunities for coordinated shoreline restoration or living shoreline preservation programs along the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, particularly in areas where nutrient and sediment load reductions are warranted to achieve TMDL reductions mandated by DCR/EPA.

Objective #2: Promote improved regional air quality, in coordination with FAMPO and DEQ's Air Quality Division, to ameliorate potential for ozone non-attainment potential in parts of the Region.

Strategy #1: Review air quality-related recommendations of regionally-adopted Green Infrastructure Plan and regional legislative needs recommendations submitted to VDCR for WIP Phase II to highlight priority legislative initiatives for regional endorsement to be included in legislative agenda for 2013 General Assembly consideration.

Strategy #2: Support regional participation in the National Transit Database Vanpool Incentive Program to promote vanpool reporting of VMTs and ridership to the National Transit database and generate future revenues to support regional capital improvement projects that will relief traffic congestion.

f) Continuum of Care, Affordable Housing & Community Development

Goal #10: Expand opportunities for all persons in the Region to find permanent, affordable housing that meets their personal needs for shelter.

Objective #1: Sustain GWRC's role as HMIS Lead Agency for the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania-Stafford (PD 16) Continuum of Care (COC).

Strategy #1: Support regional COC by adding the HMIS Lead Agency representative to the COC Executive Committee.

Strategy #2: Expand COC member agency participation in the user group of the HMIS to increase potential for services coordination among COC members and increase the user base to spread the cost of adequate user support to a wider community group.

Strategy #3: Adopt regional policy that encourages local governments that agree to fund potential HMIS-user agencies to require agency adoption of the HMIS system as a condition of funding award.

Strategy #4: Develop HMIS operations and training plan, with corresponding budgets, so that local governments and user agencies contribute equitably to an adequately staffed and resourced HMIS program to meet the expanding demands for use of the HMIS from federal and state grant agencies.

Strategy #5: Continue to improve HMIS data quality to meet and exceed federal Annual Housing Assessment Report (AHAR) and Annual Performance Reports (APR) and other reporting standards to ensure on-going federal and state funding eligibility for local shelter provider agencies and the HMIS lead agency.

Objective #2: Support regional private and non-profit sector initiatives to study the need and advocate for affordable housing program opportunities in the Region to improve the quality of life for those homeless persons and others living in sub-standard housing conditions.

Strategy #1: Continue GWRC staff participation on the Housing First Committee, formed by the Rappahannock Area Board of Realtors.

Objective #3: Continue to support community development efforts advanced through the Virginia Dept of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Block Grant program by serving on project planning and implementation committees, when required by DHCD pr at the invitation of the local government project sponsor.

Strategy #1: Continue monitoring local governments' CDBG program interest and coordinate the establishment of supportive regional program priorities that support active local CDBG implementation grant applications and initiatives.

Strategy #2: Provide staff participation in local Planning Grant projects, upon local request, and support these projects to the extent the GWRC has work program flexibility and available staffing resources to assist member and non-member (i.e. Towns) localities.

Strategy #3: Accept local government pass-through CDBG funding to provide technical assistance to produce planning product deliverables required in planning or implementation grants.

g) Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation

Goal #11: Maintain the Region's ability to address and mitigate the impacts of natural and chemical hazard threats to persons and personal property of the Region.

Objective #1: Sustain the regional hazards mitigation planning and response capacity.

Strategy #1: Continue to work through the regional hazard mitigation planning committee to update annually the regional critical facilities list.

Strategy #2: Maintain regional GIS data-sharing agreement with all member governments, providing a regional FTP site for localities to provide updated GIS information to help the Region and the State monitor new development patterns and populations at risk.

Strategy #3: Refine and make available to the jurisdictions, the current regional critical facilities database maintained by the GWRC. Ensure common definition of critical facilities among the Region's localities and other users and map non-sensitive locations using GIS.

Strategy #4: Evaluate the vulnerability of the region's critical facilities to hazards and make recommendations for improving resiliency; focusing on generator power to shelters.

Strategy #5: Review regional compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) on an annual basis and make recommendations where appropriate.

Strategy #6: With local or other funding that may be secured, develop a regional preparedness guide focusing on natural hazards to disseminate to the public by 2013.

Strategy #7: Continue to improve regional inter-operable emergency communications and planning by coordinating data and information- sharing across all technologies (i.e. both GIS mapping and Computer-aided Dispatch (CADD), when possible).

Strategy #8: Monitor opportunities for federal FEMA or other grant funding sources to pursue grants that would support regional and local hazard mitigation strategy implementation.

Objective #2: In cooperation with FAMPO for the urban MPO area, study the enhancement of regional arterial and interstate corridors to provide emergency warning systems and detour announcements to manage and alert traffic under a severe weather threat.

Strategy #1: Ensure that FAMPO considers the need for emergency traffic communications systems in the annual development of the Unified Planning Work Program and through the development of special transportation corridor studies.

Objective #3: In cooperation with FAMPO, local health care providers, utility companies and disability advocacy organizations; explore the feasibility of developing a special needs population registry to help first responders and utility emergency crews prioritize emergency responses to restore power and access to homes and neighborhoods cut-off from outside contact as a result of a weather-related event (e.g. flood, wind and storm damage, heavy snowfall and ice storms that may disrupt electrical power distribution and traffic circulation).

Strategy #1: Convene a regional meeting of stakeholder organizations to identify how the community currently maintains record of such special need populations at risk, issues related to personal confidentiality and potential resources that could support the development, implementation and maintenance of the special needs population registry.

Objective #4: Explore ways to support and enhance local emergency planning committees (LEPCs) and their efforts to plan for and mitigate the risk to the Region's population and workforce associated with toxic chemical, biological or radioactive hazards.

Evaluation System

Every year, as a condition of accepting the regional planning grant from DHCD, each PDC must file a report with the State and to its member local governments on the region's efforts to review, report progress in implementation of or amend the adopted regional strategic plan. This annual review (and corresponding reporting of the Commission activities, adopted work program and budget and members of the PDC Board) provides an opportunity to evaluate the progress the Commission has made on those strategies adopted and accomplishments achieved through the Commission's work program. Moreover, through periodic progress reports from the Commission's advisory committees to the full GWRC Board, the Commission will have a regular opportunities to evaluate the progress and impact of the Plan's implementation.

Implementation Plan: FY 2013-2014

A. Establish GWRC advisory committees

In order to engage local governments and other regional community stakeholders, GWRC staff have recommended the formation of several project committees to advance several program themes of interest to the Commission. The Commission has not yet formalized the creation of all of these committees as of mid-July, 2013.

Established Committees:

1. Regional Inter-Operability Emergency Communications Committee

Committee Mission: Promote the exchange of technical and administrative information between first-responders within the Region (and beyond) to help all emergency response units maintain currency on how to communicate with each other on various radio and CADD systems; design and implement cost-effective practices to facilitate better inter-governmental communications in the field; and identify outside resources which the Region can pursue to fill gaps in the Regional inter-operability network.

2. Regional Environmental Stewardship Committee

Committee Mission:

- a) Work to promote inter-governmental collaboration to reduce the overall costs of:
 - i. the implementation of new State stormwater management regulations and fees to promote greater consistency and stormwater management program effect throughout the Region;
 - ii. the selection and implementation of urban and rural BMP strategies to comply with Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals and impaired stream clean-up efforts; and,
 - iii. achieving the regional voluntary conservation easement goal adopted by the Commission in the Regional Green Infrastructure Plan.
- b) Coordinate with Rappahannock River Basin Commission, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, environmental non-government organizations (e.g. Friends of the Rappahannock and others) to avoid duplication of effort and potential intra-regional competition for outside grant resources which may adversely affect the Region's competitive position and Plan implementation.

3. Regional Hazards Mitigation Plan Implementation Committee

Committee Mission: Support the implementation of adopted local and regional strategies in the 2012 Regional Hazards Mitigation Plan; and identify and pursue grant resources which can support implementation of local and regional mitigation projects, including (but not limited to) the regional special needs population registry.

Proposed Committees:

1. Regional Governmental Services Coordination & Integration Committee

Committee Mission: To explore opportunities to regionalize (fully or partially) the delivery of local government services where cost-savings and service efficiencies may be realized or local program effectiveness may be enhanced through regional cooperative efforts; and identify any legislative, regulatory or administrative impediments to the implementation of any Committee recommendations.

2. Regional Economic Development & Tourism Research Committee

Committee Mission:

- a) Identify information, research and analytical gaps that could be filled to strengthen local and regional economic development and tourism efforts.

- b) Oversee the development or acquisition of regional and local market demographic information to ensure Committee acceptance and use of the information resources.
- c) Identify cost-saving opportunities to improve the cost-effectiveness of existing programs.
- d) Recommend support roles that GWRC could play to address gaps and cost-savings opportunities identified, and
- e) Consider the development of regional farmers' market consortium or program to enhance the effectiveness of existing regional farmers' market collaborative.

3. Regional Broadband Service Advisory Committee

Committee Mission: To support the implementation of reasonably-priced Broadband Internet services throughout the Region, particularly in those rural areas which currently lack or have inadequate service.

4. Regional Health Care Assessment Advisory Committee

Committee Mission: Work with regional health care providers and the regional health district to conduct an assessment of the Region's health care delivery system, identifying service gaps and under-served areas; promote the development of service delivery plans to improve access to health care for those economically-, geographically- or culturally-disadvantaged from the health care system.

5. Regional Emergency Planning Committee

Committee Mission: Work with federally-required community participants in the development of regional emergency operations plan necessary to comply with CERCLA and SARA Title III legislation and ensure that local governments have a viable and effective hazardous materials response plan with full engagement of widespread community interests.

B. Organize Advisory Committee Structures

1. Recommend GWRC elected official chairmanship or appointment of citizen chair (?) and Committee election of local staff vice-chairman.
2. A staff member from each local government (5)
3. Representatives from invited stakeholder groups and organizations (up to 5)
4. GWRC staff representative
5. Organizational meeting to set-up meeting schedule and leadership, discuss Virginia public meeting notification and FOIA requirements.
6. Establish Committees' operating procedures, goals and work plans for fiscal year (2012-2013).
7. Evaluate whether the Commission needs to prioritize among these programs or to work with local governments and other stakeholders to secure adequate funding, staffing and planning support to develop meaningful regional program recommendations in so many areas.

C. Establish Guidelines for Frequency of Reporting Committee Progress to GWRC

The GWRC Board has been discussing a possible change to the frequency of Board meetings which may lead to more support for the active work with the proposed regional committee structure and the reporting of recommendations to the Commission for policy discussion and final action.

GWRC Board of Directors, FY 14-15

The George Washington Regional Commission members are appointed by the respective local governing bodies. Each county and city governing body appoints two elected officials to sit on the GWRC Board. The Commissioners serve a term that is coincident with their elected term of office. The Chairman is selected by majority vote and serves for a period of one year. The Chairmanship is rotated between the member jurisdictions of the Commission through the rotation of officers (Chairman, 1st Vice Chair, 2nd Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary).

Caroline County

Calvin B. Taylor, Treasurer

Board of Supervisors, Port Royal District
14023 Stonewall Jackson Rd., Woodford, VA 22580
(804) 633-5571
E-Mail: ctaylor@co.caroline.va.us

Jeffery S. Black

Board of Supervisors, Western Caroline District
208 Woodside Lane, Ruther Glen, VA 22546
(804) 448-1748
E-Mail: jsb231@aol.com

City of Fredericksburg

Bradford Ellis

Vice Mayor, Ward 1
P.O. Box 7447, Fredericksburg, VA 22404
Home: (540) 371-0925
E-Mail: bcellis@fredericksburgva.gov

Matthew Kelly, Secretary

City Council Member, At-Large
P.O. Box 7447 Fredericksburg, VA 22404
Home: (540) 373-7938
E-Mail: kelly058@verizon.net

King George County

Joseph W. Grzeika, Second Vice Chair

Board of Supervisors, Madison District
Phone: 540-775-2190
E-Mail: jgrzeika@co.kinggeorge.state.va.us

Dale W. Sisson, Jr.

Board of Supervisors, At-Large
Phone: 540-775-0271
E-Mail: sisson4kg@msn.com

Spotsylvania County

David Ross, First Vice Chair

Board of Supervisors, Courtland District
P. O. Box 99
Spotsylvania, VA 22553
Phone: 571-594-0814
E-Mail: David.Ross@spotsylvania.va.us

Paul D. Trampe

Board of Supervisors, Salem District
P. O. Box 99
Spotsylvania, VA 22553
Phone: 540-850-9073
E-Mail: PTrampe@spotsylvania.va.us

Stafford County

Cord Sterling

Board of Supervisors, Rockhill District
32 Muster Drive
Stafford, VA 22554
Phone: (540) 604-1610
E-Mail: csterling@staffordcountyva.gov

Gary Snellings, Chair

Board of Supervisors, Hartwood District
330 Enon Road
Fredericksburg, VA 22406
Phone: (540) 371-6293
E-Mail: gary.hartwood@live.com

Appendix A: 2006 RADCO Strategic Plan (2006 – 2012)

Facilitating Regional Solutions

Goal: To improve the ability of the region's governing bodies to make policy decisions in the face of the rapid change that is occurring in and around the region.

Objective #1: Develop the information needed to understand the demographic changes occurring in the region, the trends and the impacts of those changes on local government policies and services.

Strategy #1: Prepare an annual report on the demographic changes occurring in the region, including identification of the internal and those external forces that influence the changes.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO Staff, Regional Planning Advisory Committee (*Establish a working group with demographic analysis expertise including the resources of the higher education facilities in the region and other appropriate sources*)

Objective #2: Identify opportunities and potential regional approaches to policy, facility and service issues facing the region that can be used as a resource for local decision making-.

Strategy #1: Research examples and develop a list of "best practices" in Virginia and other states for regional solutions to issues faced by all localities in the region, including opportunities for revenue sharing public-private partnerships, and jointly provided facilities and services.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO Staff and the Commission

Transportation

Goal: Enhance the ability of RADCO members and FAMPO to develop recommendations on transportation issues thereby strengthening the region's leadership in transportation planning.

Objective #1: Collect data and make information available to policymakers to enable meaningful policy and planning discussions by FAMPO, RADCO, local governing bodies and planning commissions.

Strategy #1: Maintain a regional GIS database, at the Transportation Analysis Zone level, that includes all relevant data necessary for sound transportation planning decision making.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: FAMPO Technical Advisory Committee, RADCO staff

Strategy #2: To promote efficient use of planning resources, identify "Best Practice" examples; share this information with appropriate planning boards and staff.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: FAMPO Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Advisory Group with staff support, RADCO staff.

Objective #2: Facilitate planning and policy discussions between policy makers and stakeholders.

Strategy #1: Conduct transportation summits and charrettes to develop recommendations on specific transportation problems or issues.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: FAMPO Policy Board, Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Advisory Group with staff support, RADCO Commission and staff.

Strategy #2: Integrate FAMPO, Caroline and King George transportation planning activities to develop a comprehensive regional vision and program.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: FAMPO Policy Board, Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Advisory Group with staff support, RADCO Commission and staff.

Infrastructure

1. **Goal:** Partner with other stakeholders to develop solutions to the region's inadequate telecommunications infrastructure, and to the higher cost of access in our region versus our neighbors.

Objective #1: Establish a Subcommittee of RADCO to work as an active partner with public and private interests in the regional effort to identify and recommend actions to improve the availability of affordable broadband service.

Strategy #1: Work with Fred Tech, the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Fredericksburg Regional Council to "refresh" the Telecom Study.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO Telecom Subcommittee, Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and Fred Tech

Strategy #2: The RADCO Telecom Subcommittee will be an active partner in efforts to use the information from the study to encourage broadband providers in the region to offer more affordable broadband service and/or identify and facilitate the entry of more competitive providers into the market

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO Telecom Subcommittee, Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and Fred Tech

2. **Goal:** Identify, promote and support regional approaches to meeting our needs for water supply, water quality and sewer services.

Objective #1: Identify, assemble and make available effective regionally-based data to support all water resource planning.

Strategy #1: Maintain a regional GIS database that includes all relevant data necessary for sound water resources planning and decision making.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO staff

Strategy #2: Reconvene the Regional Utilities Working Group to advise RADCO and member localities on the regional approaches to water resources management, including but not limited to: water supply planning, water conservation, public education and alternative wastewater disposal systems.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: Working Group, RADCO staff

Affordable Housing

Goal: Develop a better understanding of the housing affordability issues that are impacting the region including the region's workforce.

Objective #1: Identify, assemble and make available local and regional data that provides a tool or tools to accurately assess the changes in housing affordability.

Strategy #1: Work with state, regional and local agencies to develop an annual assessment that appropriate authorities accept as an accurate affordability assessment tool for the RADCO Region.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO staff

Objective #2: Identify "best practices" to appropriately impact housing affordability for local workers, assemble and make available that information to member localities and to local and regional entities concerned with housing.

Strategy #1: Work with appropriate sources to research best practices in Virginia and other states and regularly report that information to member localities.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO staff

Strategy#2: Convene a subcommittee to review "best practices" information and determine other data needed concerning improving home ownership opportunities and assessing the mix of housing across the region; as appropriate the subcommittee may make recommendations to the Commission.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: RADCO Subcommittee with staff support

Workforce Development

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of the region to provide a world class labor force in both numbers of workers and their abilities.

Objective #1: Develop the means to continually improve the capabilities of our educational system, from primary school to the post-graduate college level, to respond to the changing demands on the workers of the region.

Strategy #1: Identify the needs and develop the capacity across the education system of the region to train current and future workers in the fields and with the competencies that employers need, including the ability to re-train our existing work force to meet the demands of the changing work place.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: Sub-area group of the Bay Workforce Investment Board and RADCO

Character of the Region

Goal: Strengthen the ability of decision-makers to assess the impact of policy alternatives on the cultural, historical and ecological resources of the region.

Objective #1: Develop the information necessary to improve the capacity of local planning and policy decision-makers to determine the features in the region that define the area and to assess the impact of planning and policy choices on those features.

Strategy #1: Identify and catalog using GIS the key environmental, historical and cultural features of the region and prioritize those features based on the degree to which they are "at-risk" or threatened.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: Regional Planning Advisory Committee

Strategy #2: Research aesthetic and design standards used in other communities to protect cultural, historical and ecological resources and make recommendations for consideration by the Commission and the member localities.

Time Frame:

Responsible Party: Regional Planning Advisory Committee