



Remarks by Maura Brophy

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First, I want to talk about why it's important to talk about transportation and housing together.

With respect to housing, it's hard to point to any asset that plays a more vital role in nearly every aspect of our lives — child development, health and wellness, academic and professional success, and economic mobility. Safe and stable housing enhances the opportunities for individuals and families of all income levels to experience positive outcomes in these areas.

Transportation is the great enabler of housing and other land use. Used correctly, it allows for efficiency, fosters economic growth, enhances the environment, and connects communities.

If addressed together, housing and transportation can create communities that are livable, vibrant, healthy, and economically strong. If not, they create places that diminish quality of life, limit access to housing, jobs, and amenities, drive up costs, and limit economic growth. Transportation and housing are inherently and inextricably linked in this context, and solutions for addressing each should be treated as such.

We are already beginning to see this. In September, the Urban Institute released a framework for regional decision makers for meeting the region's future housing needs. Two out of the four recommendations identified for increasing the supply of housing through production were transportation-related: reducing parking minimums to reduce construction costs and rents and investing in TOD funds to allow for efficient, affordable development near transit. By their calculations, up-zoning residential parcels by 20 percent in transit nodes and/or activity centers in DC, Arlington, Fairfax, and Montgomery Counties would enable between 47,000 and 59,000 new residences (Urban). This is another example of the transportation/housing connection.

I feel strongly that we will not meet the region's housing needs without building out a transportation (and specifically, given the climate crisis, transit) network to accommodate the additional growth. I'm encouraged that this connection is increasingly acknowledged in work such as Urban's study, and think it is a critical part of the solution.

On housing, specifically, what progress is being made around the region and what still needs to be done?

Much progress has been made around the region. Specifically, due to the good work that came out of the Urban Institute and COG this year, we are much closer to understand the magnitude of our housing needs and have set targets for preservation and production. At the local level, progress has been made in DC, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Fairfax County, and Takoma Park to set strategies for meeting these targets. When it comes to execution, though regional leaders AND residents need to think differently about

development. At the end of the day, each jurisdiction has unique challenges with respect to development, but a common factor limiting development is restrictive land use policies that prohibit growth. Restrictive zoning, historic preservation, and height limits are examples of these restrictions. While good progress has been made towards reducing these restrictions by allowing things like ADUs, for instance, true progress is going to require wholesale changes of these policies, which is going to be difficult, but necessary.

Now that Metro has been funded, is our work on transit finished?

No, in fact the MetroNow Coalition launched a campaign focused on regional bus improvements this week. This campaign was launched out of a recognition of the good work that's come out of the BTP and also out of a recognition that the bus is a critical, yet underutilized aspect of the transportation network. Among other benefits of an improved bus network will be the ability of the bus to help meet growing demand in dense areas, and allow for growth and density in parts of the region that are not directly served by rail. The number one response to proposals for additional density is the concern over traffic and congestion. We will not—and should not—build the additional housing that's needed in this region without looking at the bus network as part of the solution that will help us meet growing demand.

What lessons can be learned from MetroNow that can be applied to the work the region needs to do on housing?

For MetroNow 1.0, we had a very specific ask. We knew exactly what we were asking for (\$500m) and had an existing funding formula that told us exactly how that cost was to be shared by the jurisdictions. From there (and similar to the way it will be for housing), it was up to the jurisdictions to come up with a strategy to meet that mark. Thanks to COG and Urban, we have a better idea now of our “ask,” but it remains unclear about how the region will participate in the solution. That's a critical next step.

Can housing also be a part of the transportation solution?

Yes. The solution lies in density and in the balancing of our network. We should be looking at excess capacity in our existing transportation network (particularly on the eastern side of the rail network) and making strategic, targeted investments in housing in those locations that will increase the efficiency of the transportation network as a whole. This will drive ridership and revenue to the system.

What is the private sector's role in the housing solution?

The private sector has a critical role to play, of course, because they are principally responsible for developing housing and delivering the units. This will continue to be the case, and the private sector is also beginning to think creatively with respect to its future role. The Washington Housing Initiative, made possible through a collaboration between the Federal City Council and JBGSmith, for instance, has come up with a new approach to preserving and financing workforce housing. This is exciting, because the model is scalable and replicable, and will be a critical part of the preservation strategy.

MAURA BROPHY

Maura is the Director of Transportation and Infrastructure at the Federal City Council. In this role, Maura is responsible for developing strategy and the execution of projects in the organization's transportation and infrastructure portfolios. Projects in this portfolio include the redevelopment of Union Station, efforts to reform the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the development of a local infrastructure development accelerator. Prior to joining the Federal City Council in January of 2016, Maura spent seven years working for Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC), a DC-based nonprofit developer and owner of affordable housing. Maura holds a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Georgetown University.