

**Conversation with Jason Miller, President Greater Washington Partnership
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Victor Hoskins:

Jason Miller is an Obama Administration alumnus. He heads up the Greater Washington Partnership. I hope he talks a little bit about his incredible board who put this together, and their mission to bring together the region all the way from Baltimore to Richmond, Virginia. With that, I introduce Jason Miller.

Jason Miller:

Thank you, Victor and thanks for having me here, Sally. I'm really glad to be able speak a little bit about the Partnership and the work that we're doing. There's some familiar faces in the room that have either engaged with me or my team: Kate [Bates], Tony [Costa], potentially others, as well.

I'll go quickly on the history of the Partnership, because I want to spend more of the discussion on what we're working on and have a dialogue with all of you on that work.

The Partnership was formed from two different threads of activities.

One was the team that was trying to bring the Washington 2024 Olympics here, led by Ted Leonsis and Russ Ramsey, and what they were doing with Washington 2024 was trying to use the Olympics as a 10-year forcing event for re-imagining the region that we want 30 years into the future. One of the profound aspects of the Washington 2024 effort was that it was truly a regional effort. If you looked at where the locations were for hosting the games, it was going to be all over Maryland, Virginia and the District. It had broad support from the business community, broad support from the public and broad political support with elected leaders, both parties in all three jurisdictions being incredibly supportive with the specifics of the effort, and partnership with the Federal Government -- given the Federal Government's role in owning and operating a number of the different sites that were going to be needed for Washington 2024. So, it was a broad effort trying to say, okay, how do we use this as a forcing event to tackle some of

the issues that sometimes our region has some friction in tackling? That did not go the way the team hoped. First, it went to Boston. Then, it went to Los Angeles, after Boston rejected it, which I think has some important lessons for us as we think about Amazon and other economic growth aspects for the region.

The second effort was by a number of large companies that are working with regions around the United States, in particular, and to a lesser extent around the world. So, JP Morgan and McKinsey, both of whom were growing their presence in this region. Some of you may have seen JP Morgan's announcement -- it was a week or two ago -- about expanding its branch network in Virginia, the District, and Maryland. What they were looking at was, how do regions really come together to tackle some of the broader, big ticket economic issues to drive competitiveness and growth, with regions increasingly becoming the global units of competition rather than countries?

Those two efforts ended up merging and the question was, okay, we don't have the Olympics or the forcing function, we need to do more as a region. How do we tackle this?

Together they built a group of 21 leaders in the region -- major employers from Baltimore to Richmond -- to create a non-profit organization that is focused on improving the economic trajectory of our region by driving enhanced collaboration, focusing on a short list of big issues at any one point in time, and really trying to bring coalitions together to move those issues forward.

When I started, in April of 2017, I had a phenomenal board. I had a multi-year budget and a one-sentence mission statement. And the question was, "Okay, what do I do with this?" "We built a team and, really, at the beginning, it was "let's do an assessment of how the region's performing so we can a better understanding of our narrative and also the kinds of things that are going to change our economic trajectory that we, as a region, need to tackle." At the same time, I met with all of my board members to learn what were their priorities, why did they invest in this organization, and what do they hope to get out of it?

So, starting with the region's economic performance. When you look from Baltimore to Richmond, our region has incredible scale. It's the third largest regional economy in the United States -- \$683 billion GDP, 10.2 million people. We are actually the seventh largest globally. So, incredible scale.

And fantastic assets, many of them unique and not able to be replicated elsewhere. Starting with, of course, the Federal Government and all of the related assets of the Federal Government. Whether it be research and development, or major customers, or a deep talent pool that moves in and out of federal service. Major transportation hubs, ports in Virginia and Baltimore, international airports. The deepest and most diverse labor pool in the United States of any regional economy with a bunch of unique capabilities in potential high growth sectors going forwards -- with particularly digital technology and life sciences.

So, we have a lot going for us, it's really good. Yet, when you looked under the hood at performance, we're a third quartile performer on almost any measure. I think it's generally not enough for an organization like ours to focus on what is our economic growth, what is our unemployment rate and what is our household income. You have to go one click below that -- what are the levers that we're trying to pull on? -- because that actually determines what types of initiatives we should focus on.

We tend to think of three indicators: dynamism, opportunity and place. So, are we creating the kind of dynamic economy that has high growth potential facilities, young firm starts or new starts and young firm growth? Are we the kind of place that when the economy performs, it lifts all boats? Are we the kind of place where people -- particularly working age people who vote with their feet -- want to live?

You can look at different metrics on dynamism. What's the share of employment in young high growth firms? What is the success rate of new starts over a five or 10-year period? You can look at opportunity metrics. How does bottom quintile perform relative to medium quintile? Is meeting quintile perform relative to overall economic growth? You can look at place, which is just net migration rates in 25- to 59-year-olds.

There's no perfect metric for any of the three, but every cut on that, we're a third-quartile performer as a region in the United States. And, one of the interesting findings was that for each of the three metropolitan areas, while different in characteristics, their relative performance was incredibly similar. For growth, trajectory, dynamism, opportunity, net migration rates -- all three metro areas were also third-quartile performance. In part, our performance is increasingly connected as a super-region. We're a third-quartile performer despite having a set of assets that I think most places around the world would be envious of.

So, then we step back and say: "Okay, we're a new organization. We have around our table, many of the major employers and non-public employers. Where can we actually have some influence that is at the scale that we need?" We decided to focus first on two issues: transportation and talent -- bedrock issues for economic competitiveness.

On the transportation side, we have a bunch of strong capital assets. If you look at a number of performance metrics of our own transportation system over the last decade, we've worsened at a rate that far exceeds the worsening that the United States has faced overall.

When you look at talent, we have supplied demand gaps in three areas: digital tech, healthcare services, particularly nurses which is a nation problem, and, skilled trades such as construction, electrical work etc.

So, we say, "Okay, what can we do with what we bring, and with what the region needs?" On transportation, we have decided that one of the challenges the region faces is what I call "the battle of pet rocks" -- I need a better term, and I'm open to that. But, it's basically "this group is advocating for their pet rock transportation project...that group wants their pet rock transportation project". It maybe that all of them are beneficial, but what ends up happening is that because there's not a consistent transportation agenda over time, the agenda is constantly shifting. Which means execution is underwhelming. If you could create consistency in the agenda, you could create better execution on what's needed in driving permits and the performance of the overall system.

We're creating what we're calling a "Blueprint for Region Mobility." It's looking at the transportation system as a whole. We are utilizing models that haven't been utilized across the system. So, as an example, we have a combination of Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland College Park -- both of whom have two of the best national centers on transportation analysis in different ways -- and, we're trying to leverage that expertise and data. We're trying to put forward a set of solutions that are pretty broad in scope. So, it's not what are the 10 capital projects that our region needs and how do we rank order them; it ranges from capital projects, to governance improvements, to operating improvements, to the role that employers need to play increasingly in our transportation system, to how do we use technology better in the transportation system? Not just things like how do we deploy automated vehicles over time and under what use cases. But, how do we make it easier for people to use different modes of transportation? Which our region, for some reason, is actually moving in the other direction right now.

So, that work's underway. As we kicked off that work, we were discussing what our roles should be on WMATA, Metro, the region. And, we engaged with many to form the Metro Now Coalition. Which ended up becoming a really broad, big coalition of business groups. Kate [Bates] and others involved in that effort, all across the region, Virginia, Maryland, and the District have gotten the first piece of business done, which was permanent, dedicated, capital funding of \$500 million a year for Metro.

For the second piece -- pieces have gotten done, but not fully -- are the government reforms needed to make sure that it's a well performing system, going forward. I'm sure Tony [Costa] will solve all of those problems for us.

Within the blueprint, we are looking at things like integrated fair payment systems, this employee mobility benefits, and a pledge by employers across the region. A three-jurisdiction -- I don't want to use the word compact, but some kind of organization, that is not a compact -- on planning, testing, data gathering, and regulating autonomous vehicles.

We're looking at major capital projects on roads and rails. We're looking at principles on bus redesign and tolling. So, it's an incredibly comprehensive effort. And, we're trying to be pretty broad in how we engage with a range of stakeholders and experts across the region in this work.

That's going to be coming out in the weeks and months ahead. We're going to have some elements of it come out over the Summer. Then, some elements of it come out in the Fall. Then, on the back end -- with all this it's not "here's our recommendation, and we walk away" -- our role in everything, is how we work with others to get this done. Not thinking that any of them we can do as an organization, despite having major cards on the table. None of it we can do by ourselves. That's transportation.

On talent, the question was we have these three areas of gaps where should we focus? Digital tech is both the most important near-term need, but also the most significant potential constraint on our future growth. As a region, we have specific verticals, where we are roughly globally leading. Like in cyber, and cyber adjacencies. But, if you look at our tech talent across the region, we had three interesting findings.

One, we're the largest producer in the country, of digitally tech qualified candidates. We're number one. That's a pretty important fact. So, if you look from Richmond to Baltimore, we are number one. And, that's at all levels. Associate's degrees, certificate programs, four-year, masters. At all three levels, and in aggregate, we're number one.

Second, we have a larger than average gap between supply and current demand. That gap is projected to widen at a rate that is faster than the US economy overall.

Third, we're a net exporter of that talent.

So, it's an interesting combination of three facts. When we look at digital technology in the region. And, for us, the question was where can we operate in scale? Across the entire pipeline from K to 12, Community College, four- year, graduate, and rescaling and retraining. There is a tradeoff always, between where can I move fast, and where can I operate scale?

We're currently working with the most significant universities across the region, to form a new coalition between them: Virginia Tech, UVA, George Mason, Richmond, VCU, GW, American, Georgetown, Howard, UMBC, Hopkins, and Oregon State. It's a really significant group of Universities. When you put it together, it demonstrates the power of universities in our region. Which is a key anchor in our economic growth intention of going forward.

The question we're currently trying to tackle is, how do we leverage this new collaboration between employers and universities going forward? We haven't announced it publicly yet, but we have a few different initiatives that we're trying to work with them on both talent development, and technology development.

We're trying to address the talent pipeline, and required needs. Make sure that in addressing it, it's done in a way that's dynamic. Make sure that both on talent development and tech development, we're addressing the underlying connectedness and perception issues, that our region faces. But better connecting the innovators between universities, businesses, and the government, as well as changing the internal act of harrowed perception of where we excel at what we have here. We're simultaneously doing a little bit of work on labor market information and policy. So, we're trying to get at where do we have scale.

As all of this was unfolding in September, as all of you well know, Amazon announced their desire to open a second headquarters. So, we engaged in that effort, with Victor [Hoskins] and others, to start by saying, "We are stronger if we sell the region. And, while we should all compete, because we have interest in the precise location, we should also share some elements of what we say publicly, and say back to Amazon as part of this effort."

In round one, part of what we did was send a document from our organization as part of all the responses to Amazon. There's 11 different bids from Richmond to Baltimore and I think we were the only element that was the exact same in all of them. The document said, "Here's what the region is. Here's why it's a profound opportunity for Amazon. Here's who we are as a group of CEOs of the leading employers in a region that you're considering entering. And, we're tackling transportation and talent -- two issues that matter to you. We're committed to your

growth and success here." I think that's something that some regions, but not all, can say. That the major employers actually want Amazon to enter the region.

Come Round two, with three of those eleven still in the final twenty, we've engaged with Virginia, Maryland and the District in trying to tackle the question of "What can you do together, in addition to what you're doing separately, to strengthen all of your collective hands because the shared economic benefits are pretty profound?"

We've done a version of the economic development modeling that everybody's done on this and there are two interesting findings. One is, irrespective of which of the remaining sites for Amazon in this region may be selected-- and I know that they're not officially public in some cases -- the other two jurisdictions will have more economic impact than probably any major business attraction deal over the last decade, or maybe 20 years. It's a huge, huge number. Two, those models don't and can't really capture the spill-over impacts to the region -- they measure direct, indirect, and induced impacts, and measure the number of jobs, spending in hotels, restaurants, and tax revenues. What they don't measure is how does this actually change our economic trajectory because of the spill-over impact of us now taking these assets that we have, and truly transforming ourselves into a leading tech hub. And not a "me-too" Silicon Valley tech hub, but, based upon our uniqueness, which inherently interacts with the capabilities of the Federal Government.

So, I think it's a huge opportunity as this moves forward our position on this is, we want to continue to make sure that the region is doing everything it can to come together, on Amazon while it appropriately competes on individual specifics. And as this plays out over 2018, do anything we can to support the effort in whatever way is seen as fit by the people leading it. I think we will have a lot of work to do, irrespective of Amazon's decision at the end of the year. So, if Amazon's coming here, how will we take full advantage of the opportunity, and how do we deal with the impacts of growth so that we don't get the negative blow backs that often come? And, if Amazon doesn't come here, how do we take advantage of all the work that's been done -- the beginnings of the change in perception of our region, to really harness this for both enhanced collaboration, to leverage our assets together. Also, to begin thinking -- not just externally, not

just with the business attraction deals -- but if I'm somebody living in the region, and I'm thinking about starting a company, am I staying here? That matters a lot.

So, that's a medium length overview of the Partnership, the initiatives, and how we are thinking about going forward. Our desire is always to be focused on just a couple of things that need point and time. And, that will, as the years go by, shift. So, I'd love to answer questions, get reactions from folks, and have a bit of a dialogue.

Bill Walsh:

Jason, early on you mentioned some lessons learned with respect to the Boston issue and how that translates to what the partnership offers.

Jason Miller:

When Boston won, or was announced as the winner of the USFCs selection process, I think there were two interesting lessons that were relevant for the Amazon HQ2 effort.

One, the Washington 2024 team was very focused on providing information, answering the questions, and trying to predict, based on the questions they were getting, what the USFC wanted. The people conducting that effort, and engaging with the Washington 2024 team, were not in the room when the decision was made. I think they felt that they may have over torqued on analyzing, based upon the inbound questions they were getting and what the selection information gathering people wanted versus what the actual decision makers were going to value. That's definitely relevant in the context of Amazon.

The second is, Boston ended up rejecting it, because effectively the efforts of one person, who started an effort which gained momentum that said “this going to be a boondoggle. It's going to be a waste of money for Boston, we're not going to benefit from this. It's going to increase congestion. It's going to increase taxes.” It was a lot of the anti-growth argument, but put in the context of the Olympics.

Victor Hoskins:

So, how many people was that again?

Jason Miller:

One.

Victor Hoskins:

How many?

Jason Miller:

Just a single man. A single man. So, those kinds of...

Victor Hoskins:

So, one can take you down.

Jason Miller:

One person. I mean, obviously he was a very influential person and effective at getting his message out there.

So, there is growing anti-everything activity. And I think definitely, around Amazon being really careful in taking that head-on early. And not saying, "Oh it's just a few people. Oh, those people aren't getting traction." They can get traction really quick.

Robert Bushkoff:

So, we're in the third quartile as far as performance. Who are the ones in the first quartile?

Jason Miller:

Yeah, so it's interesting. It is hard to find regions that perform consistently at the top on dynamism, place, and opportunity all at the same time. We, as a country are performing terribly on opportunity. In fact, there's only one metro area over a five-year period, of the major metropolitan economic region economies, that actually when grew up the curve, the bottom quintile did well relative to the medium quintile, which is Denver.

On dynamism, a lot of the places that you would expect, Boston, Denver, California, there in particular, Austin, Dallas, have all done reasonably well on dynamism.

On place, it's a little bit more mixed. Those places tend to do well. Those places have much more mixed performance and opportunity. Although, again, I think most people are under performing at opportunity. And then, on place, it's been those places that have both. Interestingly the Bay Area's not doing too well on place, because, they don't allow housing expansion.

So, I left the bay area in early 2010 to come here. At the time, I'd been looking at purchasing a home, in late 2009. In early 2010 and 2011, I was really glad that I didn't purchase a home. But if you look at housing prices, that was a really bad economic decision. But because they are not allowing for housing supply, you can't get people. So, it's a bit more mixed. If you're interested, I'm happy to show the backup analysis that actually ranks all the different areas.

Scott Pedowitz:

Building on your answer to that question, you mentioned that it's very hard to do well on all three of these indicators simultaneously. If we want to think about really investing for what's going to lead growth upon growth going forward, where do we want to put the greater focus? If we have to pick across dynamism, opportunity and place. I'm not saying one and not the others. Where would you put the marbles, if you will?

Jason Miller:

Yeah, I don't think there's necessarily tradeoffs between them. Part of the reason that no one's doing well in all three, is because everyone's doing poorly in opportunity. And, part of that is because I think we don't have fully our arms around our challenged areas. One and two is because our growth actually hasn't been as fast as it needs to be to tackle opportunities. If you look at the country overall since 1948, and you start dividing it into '48 to '73, and '73 to 2017, for the period between 1948 and 1973, we had higher growth, higher productivity gains, and higher wage gains.

In the second period we had slower growth, slower productivity gains, and slower wage gains. So, you see an increasing inequality in that second period, but the biggest driver of that was because our top line growth rate and our top line productivity was slower. So, part of the

challenge has been that as a country -- some of those levers are hard for individual metro area to tackle -- we have struggled on place.

I think for us, we need to be incredibly focused on dynamism with an eye toward managing inclusive growth. I think we are under performing pretty severely on dynamism. So, one analysis that I've seen said that's because the federal government weights the numbers in a way that makes it really hard to measure dynamism and productivity gains. If you just try to look at the industries outside of federal activities, that also tries to attempt to strip out federal contracting, our productivity gains in those industries are third quartile performing. So, we have the capabilities, but we haven't really figured out how to fully harness them for commercial expansion, to their fullest extent.

Tony Costa:

Jason, you talked a little about this when we met up two weeks ago. Interesting, and many of these folks have heard me say this, too. The federal government discussion is seen as a huge advantage, but I don't really see any hard business discussion about what that really means. It's just there. It's always there. We don't know really what it means to talk about it, move the lever just a little bit. Do you feel like you all are trying to get your arms around that piece of it?

Jason Miller:

Yeah, a little bit. Particularly it's worth digging in on the digital talent space. So, we're trying figure out what's the intersection between unique federal needs in digital talent, and capabilities that will allow our region to have some leading-edge verticals. So, we're one of three leading regions in cyber. Just for a moment, let me do a quick aside on cyber. The governors of Maryland and Virginia, both the current and former governor of Virginia, all three of them, go around the world saying, We Virginia, or we Maryland are number one in Cyber. I think that's crazy. If we keep doing that, we're no longer going to be one of the leading regions in cyber, in my view. But, right now it's us, Israel, and northern California. Three of the leading regions in cyber. There's a whole set of adjacencies around that. And, the reason that we are in there is because of the US federal government. But, it's a huge commercial opportunity. It intersects with things like AI machine learning, and data analytics. And, it's increasingly doing so. So how do

we actually harness that capability when we're thinking about talent production and talent retention? Particularly coming out of the pipeline that both the federal government wants to increase and is relying on to some extent and importers in this region, small and large are relying on. So, the largest importer in Maryland, is the National Security Agency. I don't know how many people they have in play, because it's classified. But, they're hiring over 2000 people in the next 12 months in Maryland. That's a huge number. Over half of those are tech specialists. So, you're going to get a thousand people who are at bleeding edge on a set of tech capabilities. How we do harness that, because we need to both produce that talent, and then we need to surround that talent, and then spin that talent into places where it can create the businesses. That is something that we are thinking about. I think a lot of people thought about how do we utilize the government as a major customer, to drive growth. But in my view, it's only a small portion of those buys where we can create spill-over opportunities that are unique to this region.

Tony Costa:

That just seems like the policy issues of the Federal Government kind of beat up the business discussion about our government. I think it's disappointing and bad, to use technical terms.

Jason Miller:

Yeah, the un-sexy things of procurement policy and personnel policy, need pretty dramatic reforms. They're not highly partisan topics. When I was in the Federal Government, businesses would always come and complain about how over regulated they were. I used to say, I as an individual am probably more regulated than your business.

Kate Bates:

Thank you, Jason. I think there's a lot of really great opportunity in the work that you're doing. I've got two questions for you. The first one is, I've had the opportunity to hear several members of your team talk at different business groups, usually the Chambers of Commerce and most recently with the Board of Trade, where we had my counterpart on the Maryland side. I think one of the challenges, especially from the Maryland folks, who seem to think that the idea of a region from Baltimore or Richmond, there is not much in common across the board. I think where we are, in Arlington, we're fairly central, so we can see things on both sides. But, I think

that's a challenge. So, I'm curious if you see your organization's role as helping with the branding over all?

And, then the second piece is you all have amazing people, both on your board, you, your team, and you're doing a really great job of outreach. I would love to know, what is the next step in terms of output? Or, what does success look like for you all? Since I know, you are bringing people together for a specific cause much like much like you did with the Olympics.

Jason Miller:

So, on the first, we do see, as part of our mission, to increasingly get into the bloodstream, the notion that our future is shared, as a region. We have not taken on the challenge of rebranding the region. But we do think it's important to drive what's imperative of the region. And, the reason, look, every locality, no matter how small your locality is, one block, or a county, or a metropolitan area, will have unique characteristics and you need challenges to that specific place. That's definitely true in our region, I think the diversity of our region is a unique advantage that we don't harvest enough.

But, in addition to the fact that the relative performance is becoming increasingly similar, the potential growth levers from an industry standpoint, are the same across the entire region. We should start by recognizing that reality. That doesn't mean tackling a unique school issue in one locality. Something that neither we can do, nor the region can take on. It needs to be done by local leaders. But, we will always say, the Capital Region. The Capital Region of Baltimore, Washington to Richmond. Or, from Baltimore to Richmond. We'll talk about Washington, DC. It's at the heart of the Capital region. And, if you think about the different shares, just size, Washington is about 66% of that \$683 billion, Baltimore is 22-23 %, and Richmond is about 11-11 1/2%. For a lot of large employers, they're already operating at cost multiple places, right? So, Capital One runs the largest shuttle service between Richmond and the Washington area every day. I think they're shuttling like 400 or 500 people back and forth every day, up and down 95. You are starting to see certain businesses, like Coach Star operating a portion of their operations in Richmond, and a portion of their operations in Washington.

You have places that have both Baltimore and Washington and MedStar as the health systems. Scans the District all the way up, and has two hospitals in Baltimore. So, there are elements that are highly connected. When you talk to the universities, and you ask them where their students go, Virginia Tech has a huge number of people that end up in Maryland. The broader Washington Metro area is a major draw for Virginia Tech alum's. So, we're trying to reinforce the narrative that our future is connected. We do see that as part of our mission in everything that we do.

On what does success look like? For us, I would put it in two different buckets. On any individual thing that we're going to do, we're going to try to identify a few metrics that we can move the needle on and then we're going to try to test, potentially a non-scientific way, perception of that issue. So, right now, transportation, we can measure plenty of things around reliability, congestion, performance of public transportation, access to jobs, etc. Can we actually move the needle over a three to five-year period on our transportation metrics? And, in a one to three-year period, can we begin to change the perception that our transportation system's headed in the right direction?

So, we're going to try them both. And, the second one, perception matters. So, Baltimore has a pretty significant personal security issue right now. At the same time, there's a lot of exciting stuff happening in Baltimore City, in the Baltimore Metropolitan area. Yet, the perception is that Baltimore can't get its arms around the problem. The numbers have actually been improving. But, this perception, it lingers.

If you actually look at the metrics of public security or public safety, in New Orleans compared to Baltimore, it's pretty similar. But, there's a sense, a perception that there's a plan, and it's getting better, and it's going to get better over time. And, that obviously intersects with business decisions, and where people locate things, and whether people are willing to start their businesses in certain places and stay.

So, that's sort of how we're thinking about it. For us, success isn't in three years. We are now a first quartile performer in all three of those measures. Success in three years, is we've changed

the perception on transportation and talent, and we're beginning to see the performance improvements on transportation and talent.

And, the additional piece is, we're starting to see enhanced collaboration. There's always going to be competition, that's actually a good thing. How we encourage the good competition and minimize the bad competition. The universities are a good example of that. So, we had all these universities around the table, as we were talking about what we can do together. And, the Rector of UVA, Rusty Conner, walks up, or gets basically attacked, by the president of UMBC, Freeman Hrabowski. I don't know if any of you have met Freeman, he's like a ball of energy. He comes up to Rusty, and is like, "We got ya." Because UMBC was the first 16-seed to ever win a first round game. He made sure he let Rusty know that they had beaten UVA in a year that many thought that UVA had a chance. Without missing a beat, Rusty turned to him and said, "Yeah, but we beat you on cyber this year." In 2017, UMBC was the National Cyber Champions, in 2018 it was UVA. But I say that in competition, a lot of times you get in a race and the second fastest time ever is the person who had the silver medal.

So, how do we harness positive competition within the region for those kinds of games. And frankly, I think there has been more collaboration on Amazon than anyone would have anticipated in September when this came out. One of the things that we said to both the governors and the mayor is, "Do everything you can to sell yourselves. But, sell the region, and agree to never badmouth one another, because that's just going to hurt you." And, thus far, they've been awesome on that front. I think the work on Metro in October, when we were entering this discussion on Metro, people said, "Should our goal be to make sure that there's a political cost, when everyone fails in 2018? Or, should we actually try to do this in 2018?" And so, I think you're starting to see some positive momentum.

Speaker?:

Jason, this has been a fascinating discussion. You had mentioned earlier that you liked to distill things down to a couple initiatives. I'm going to challenge you. Could you name the number one obstacle to political will?

Jason Miller:

Well, I think on transportation, the battle for pet rocks is actually really a significant problem. So, for example, the American Legion Bridge. What is the cost to inaction for political electives on American Legion Bridge? Thus far, not much.

How do you build a coalition that's broad enough that both Virginia and Maryland feel pain associated with an action? That was our strategy in Metro. It was, we are going to build a big coalition. It's not just the biggest business coalition that we can get, we're going to get transit groups. In Maryland, we had environmental groups and all kinds of pretty far left leaning organizations. In Virginia, we had Chambers from Roanoke and from Hampton Roads and business groups and other further right leaning organizations, trying to build a really big coalition.

So that, every legislator knew, that if they failed, we were going to make them feel pain. And I think that's big. I think that people don't feel much cost to either inaction or inadequate forward momentum on transportation.

Jill Caiazzo:

Just to go back to the Amazon HQ issue, you had mentioned you thought it would be prudent to get ahead of the anti-growth, anti-everything folks, and I hear a lot from them and they're definitely out there. How do you suggest doing that given the struggles with the opportunity that you also described?

Jason Miller:

That's a really good, and important question. I wish that I had 'the' answer to that. It's one that I'm trying to figure out. So, my example that I always tell like on the anti-growth thing is I was on the Kojo Nnamdi Show. Christian Dorsey was on the show with me. At the end, we're talking about the region, and growth opportunities, and our tech capabilities, a lot of the stuff we talked about here. And a caller calls in and said, "I think you guys are all crazy. We can't handle the growth that we have today." Hear me. We can't handle the growth that we have today? And, all this other stuff is going to make it hard for me to afford where I want to live, and my kids aren't

going to be able, are going to be in an overcrowded school. I think we need two different things. One, is we're not a fast growth region today. We're a slow growth region today. So, this notion that we can't handle our current growth, suggests we can't handle growth at all.

And, again, back to my map of the US, 1940 to 2017, all of these challenges associated with economic opportunity, we are better able to deal with them if we can first try faster growth. But, we need to be clear that we're not just pretending on those issues. We need to tap them head on. And, I think the nice thing with Amazon, as an example, is that we have a clear window. We have a ten-year growth forecast. Now what the numbers end up being, and how fast they hire, is unclear. But, we can bring people together and say "Okay, how are we going to address school population today? How are we going to address housing affordability, and how are we going to address transportation?" And, actually, be public and explicit about it. And, hold the political electives accountable for it. Show that the business community is going to be part of the table that solves those issues, and not just say, "that's for other people to address".

And, I think that kind of combination of reinforcing the notion that economic growth actually gives us the tools we need to address opportunity and economic mobility. As well as, we're not just going to leave that problem to others, but we're going to tackle it. I think some combination of that is the right equation. But, I also don't pretend that I have the right answer to that quite yet.

Sally Duran:

Well, let's talk about water. Water and transportation -- one of the issues particularly in Arlington, that I'd like to know what the region's strategy is. We don't not own any of our water front, it's owned by the National Park Service. And, we need access to the water. So, when you're talking about more flexible transportation in the future, how does water fit into that strategy?

Jason Miller:

It's a really good question, and the interaction with federal ownership is both a land and a water problem. I think some of our biggest challenges are bridges. If we leave those, and say, "Well, that's really hard, we're going to deal with other stuff" we're not tackling the core bottlenecks. So, we have to get at the core bottleneck.

On the role of the federal government I think there are many in the Federal Government that will appropriately ask the question, does it still make sense that we hold these assets? And, in certain cases the answer's yes. In certain cases, the answer's no.

Within the Washington 2024 context, the federal government was willing to do a lot that people never expected they would be willing to do to better the region, to leverage those assets for a whole set of activities that typically people said, "Well some bureaucrats up in the National Park Service are impossible."

So, I think with a real, a reasonable plan, and a thoughtful coalition together, you can deal with some of those, but you kind of need to prioritize which ones you're going to try to tackle first.

Victor Hoskins:

I have a two-part question. This group has heard from you now, the Great Washington Partnership that runs from Richmond to Baltimore. They've heard from the President and CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the agency that is actually implementing the government's policy in economic development. They've heard from the County Manager on our Way Forward economic development strategy. The first part of the question is how are you coordinating together with those bodies? The second part is, this is an advisory commission that advises the Arlington County Board. What could they do to make it more likely that we get Amazon?

Jason Miller:

We're trying very hard on the first question to make sure that at the very least, we have open channels of communication with all the key players and actors around the region. There's too many for a small team to manage on a daily basis. But, I'm trying to make sure we've at least made a connection with all the key actors and that we have back and forth with the big decision makers. And, then I need to be sure we're bringing people around the table and making sure we have their input. I actually won a sort of a sigh on that question a lot of times, particularly in this region. People say, we have too many organizations. There's like, too much stuff.

When we started, one of the things we did was try to figure out what kind of an organization are we, and, who's similar and different to us when we look at other major metropolitan areas. There's no correlation that we could find between the number of organizations and the performance of the region.

There are some organizations where they consolidated a lot of the different activities under one tent. And others where they left them and kept spawning new organizations. And, some of the really well performing ones were in bucket one, and some of the really well performing ones were in bucket two.

The thing that actually differentiated them was if there was relative agreement on what the agenda should be. Not necessarily what the answer was. It was more what the agenda should be. And, to the extent that they were different groups, they had a clear understanding of how to work with one another. I think that's really important for us. I think it's not the right question to ask, "do we have too many groups, or not enough groups?" It's what is our agenda, and are we all rowing in the same direction?

On, what can this commission in particular do to increase our probability of getting Amazon? I think that that how you address the down sides of growth, and the push back from the communities, is really important. For one, I think that Arlington has a history that shows it can take those questions pretty head on. And, I think getting out front of it, and demonstrating that there's a path, I don't know what that path is, but, demonstrating, hey, we're out front of this. Look, Amazon... My formerly \$99 and currently \$119 is like the best money I spend every year for Amazon Prime. The fact that I think that about Amazon, it's an incredible accomplishment for that company. Almost 50% of households have Amazon Prime memberships. That's an amazing number.

So, this is a company that wants to be the greatest brand in the world. As the greatest brand in the world, they don't want to go to a place where all the people that live around there aren't welcoming.

So, how do you say, look, not only do we have a unique talent base, and a bunch of governments that want to partner with you, and universities that can out match any region around the world, and all the positives of being proximate to the federal government. But, we're going to be your partner, and here's the ways we're going to be your partner, in dealing with this. So, not only do we harness the benefits from it, but you're actually somebody that the community is proud of. And, the community feels that you have actually improved the trajectory of these issues. I think that is something that Arlington can be uniquely positioned for.

Sally Duran:

So, I have to feel out that question. So, from my timeframe standpoint, Amazon's going to make their decision by the end of the year. If there was sort of a backlash, or push back, because honestly, we've got an issue right now, school population. We've got an issue with housing cost. So, when would that message need to occur?

Jason Miller:

Now. I don't think it's wait till Amazon announces. I think it's to say, "Hey, we're going to tackle these issues. I don't think Arlington can tackle this challenge by itself. But I think Arlington can do a lot that sit within the borders.

I have confidence, based on the conversations with all three of the jurisdictions, that irrespective of where Amazon lands, all of them are serious about the shared cost that's associated with it. We want to be a partner in forcing that with both the carrots and the sticks needed to make sure everybody's working together on those challenges. I think it's going to be really hard for the two states and the District to announce a bunch of stuff that they're willing to do before either an additional round of further cull of the herd, or an announcement of who the winner is.

If there is either of those, we're going to be pushing really, really hard for them to come together and say, "Here's what we're going to do about addressing those issues, in addition to all things we're going to do about making this a fantastic work place for Amazon".

Brian Drzewiecki(?):

So, just to close on that, there's a recent article that came out that, the cities that didn't make the cut, actually took conference calls with Amazon to learn why, and what they can do to better position. So, have we taken that feedback into consideration, so that we know. 'Cause one of them was transport, which... Detroit was, I focused on Detroit since that's where I was born and raised. I'm surprising that they were in the running. They lost out because all their talent was in the burbs. There was no way to get it into the city, except for congestion. So, there was some feedback that, I was wondering if that's relative.

Jason Miller:

So, we've tried to gather intel on this, and the only two data points that we've heard is if you don't have a deep enough talent pool today, and your transportation system isn't up to snuff for what we need. That's the two things.

Brian Drzewiecki:

And they announced the news this morning, they're shutting all the south of Reagan's stations down. So, I mean, I've lived here for three years. It just seems like we're plagued with that track. We have a metro system that works well, when it works. And, really has some issues. So, is that part of this whole discussion?

Jason Miller:

So, yeah, that is the first. What happened in the three jurisdictions that they chose was prehistoric. And, I think a huge sign to their ability to deal with some of these challenges, together. Someone like Amazon looks at the region. That doesn't mean we don't have a lot more to do. At the same time, we have some of the more innovative transportation projects around the country happening here. So, we have to figure out how to get a little bit more forward momentum on it. But, Metro has a meaningful transformation that it needs to go through in the near term. But, the bones of the system are pretty good.

So, there's other places, like Baltimore for example. They called Baltimore, "you know, you guys don't have a public transportation system today, and even though you have a bunch of ideas and plans, it's not going to be there for 10 years. So, we can't align that."

So, yeah, we need to tackle it, but I think we're in a good starting place.