

COOPERATIVE FORECASTING GROUP

February 24, 2021

Virtual Meeting

10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Mr. Jeff Bronow, CFG Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Kathleen Comber moved to approve the minutes from the December meeting of the Cooperative Forecasting Group (CFG) with Ms. Kui Zhao seconding the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Before the Chair began with the meeting's agenda, Mr. Shawn Kimberly (BMC staff), addressed the leadership change in the group. He noted that Baltimore County's two-year role as Chair of the group ended with the December 16, 2020 CFG meeting. The February meeting of the group was to have been the first with Carroll County as Chair and Harford County as Vice-Chair. However, recent staffing changes resulted in Carroll County declining the role of Chair at this time. In order to preserve the cycle of leadership – while also providing Harford County with an opportunity to first serve as Vice-Chair before becoming Chair, Mr. Kimberly asked the veteran CFG member from Howard County to take on the Chair role. Mr. Bronow from Howard County accepted the role and is now serving as Chair, with Harford County serving as Vice-Chair of the CFG. Mr. Bronow noted that while he accepted the role, he is open to making a change in leadership at the end of this year, as the group may want to consider an adjustment at that time. Mr. Bronow suggested the group could discuss the topic at the October 2021 CFG meeting.

2. BASE YEAR EMPLOYMENT METHODOLOGY DISCUSSION

Prior to opening the topic for discussion, Mr. Kimberly provided background information on the base year employment methodology topic, as well as the methods discussed during previous meetings of the group. He also summarized where group members stood on the topic at the end of the December meeting:

- Baltimore County, Howard County, and Queen Anne's County were in favor of utilizing the BEA/QCEW ratio method for wage and salary employment, combined with the ACS for self-employment;
- While open to the decision of the CFG, Baltimore City preferred the selection of a method that would not result in a lower numeric figure for total employment;
- Anne Arundel County, Carroll County, and Harford County were without a strong opinion on methodology preference – and willing to adhere to the group decision

In addition, Mr. Kimberly shared with the group an analysis he had performed in response to CFG membership interest in the consideration of the issue of jobs and housing balance. The analysis takes a closer look (at the regional level) at the relationship between jobs and households over time, and between forecast rounds. Mr. Kimberly noted that the analysis he performed was based upon the work of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and their Regional Housing Initiative – which utilizes a ratio of Jobs / HHs of 1.54 as a measure of balance. Mr. Kimberly stressed that the metric is intended to provide a general sense of the status of the relationship between jobs and households in the region. He added that his analysis illustrates how that ratio has changed not just between forecast rounds, but within them as well. He pointed out that a difference observed between Rounds 7C and Round 8 was largely due to a change made to base year employment methodology in 2012 and a recalibration of household totals due to the inclusion of the (then) newly released 2010 Decennial Census data. Mr. Kimberly also pointed out that the change of the Jobs/HHs ratio within forecast rounds between the base year and the 25-year forecast horizon has increased over time. He added that while this metric may not necessarily impact the base-year employment methodology discussion, the divergence between household and employment growth expectations evident at the regional level in several of the CFG forecast rounds could help inform future forecasting efforts.

The topic was then opened to discussion. Mr. Bronow and Mr. Greg Goodwin stressed the importance of considering the relationship between jobs and households. Mr. Bronow noted that there had been differences in the past between CFG jurisdictions in how they defined base year employment. He added that unconstrained and optimistic economic assumptions can contribute to the imbalance – with the imbalance being justified by assumptions about commutation into the region from outside (DC); while DC was likely making similar assumptions about their Jobs / HHs balance.

After a brief discussion about the merits of the different sources and methods, Mr. Bronow asked the group membership to state their preferred base-year employment method – in an effort to gauge whether or not a consensus had been reached. In the call for an update on the position of membership on methodology, the group supported the selection of the “Hybrid A” method:

- Baltimore County, Howard County, and Queen Anne's County reiterated their support for the use of the Hybrid A methodology;

- Carroll County and Harford County indicated that they support the selection of the Hybrid A method;
- Baltimore City, while preferring a method that would maintain a higher employment figure, stated that they were willing to accept the group's choice;
- Anne Arundel County was absent from the meeting.

Upon hearing the input from all present jurisdictions, and determining that a consensus had been reached, Mr. Bronow stated that the decision had been made for the CFG membership to utilize the "Hybrid A" methodology for Round 10 base-year employment estimation.

As a reminder, the Hybrid A methodology is summarized here:

- Total Employment = Wage and Salary Employment + Self-employment
 - o Wage and Salary Employment: To be derived via the application of a ratio of Bureau of Economic Analysis Wage and Salary Employment / QCEW employment (calculated by jurisdiction) to 2020 QCEW jurisdictional level employment totals. This ratio allows for a customized approach to the development of base-year employment estimates that are inclusive of all wage and salary employment, including that which is not covered by unemployment insurance.
 - o Self-employment: To be derived for each jurisdiction from American Community Survey employment data on class of worker for workplace geography (Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers + Unpaid family workers).

3. 2020 TAZ BOUNDARY DELINEATION: TIMING AND PROCESS

Mr. Kimberly introduced the topic of the 2020 TAZ boundary delineation process, noting that it is a collaborative effort between local government and BMC staff. He described the spatial layers (including the Census Bureau's 2020 Geographic Products and the 2010 TAZ layer) and the demographic data that would be used in the process (including ACS and Round 9A datasets).

Mr. Kimberly also provided a timeline for the task.

- March: BMC staff performs preliminary spatial work (comparing 2010 TAZ geography to 2020 Census block groups); BMC provides spatial and demographic data files to CFG membership; BMC staff creates and distributes draft maps highlighting areas that might stay the same, may be in a need of a split, may be in need of merge, may have some other issue (these maps are intended to provide a starting point for CFG membership consideration, not to serve as presumed final boundaries).

- April/May: CFG members review draft maps and perform their own analyses (developing comments); meetings to be held between CFG and local jurisdiction staff to review comments and edits; BMC staff incorporates suggested edits into a draft boundary file.
- May/June: BMC distributes draft 2020 TAZ boundary file to each CFG member (including CFG edits); CFG member and local staff review draft boundary file. If the file is acceptable, the CFG member sends a transmittal email to BMC staff stating the boundary file is approved. If additional edits are requested, BMC staff works with the CFG member and local staff until the boundary is finalized and approved.

Mr. Brian Ryder, BMC staff, then provided the group with some background information on TAZs and technical details describing the TAZ boundary delineation process. He explained that a new TAZ boundary delineation review is conducted after each decennial census. He noted that TAZs are often the size of block groups (except in employment focused areas), and generally contain approximately 600 to 3,000 in population, or 600+ in employment. He added that there are currently 1,397 TAZs in the Baltimore region, and there are 1,992 block groups (based upon 2020 Census geography).

[PowerPoint: TAZ_BoundaryDelineation]

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Kimberly brought up the fact that the Census Bureau announced on February 12 that it would deliver the redistricting data file (PL 94-171) to all states “by September 30, 2021.” This is approximately six months later than the normal timeline, and two months beyond the July 31 date that had been reported in the Census Bureau’s April 13, 2020 statement on Operational Adjustments Due to Covid-19.

Mr. Bronow said that the delay would have an impact not just on demographic estimates and forecasting, but also on the work of the county’s redistricting commission (which needs the data in order to create councilmanic districts). He noted that the county has primaries and elections in 2022, and that completing the redistricting work in time could be challenging – considering the significant delay in the release of the dataset that fuels the process.

While noting that the delay is significant, Mr. Bronow observed that the delay would still leave three months to develop population and household estimates and forecasts in compliance with the current Round 10 schedule. He stated that his office typically works on the annual forecast updates toward the end of the year, and that he expected Howard County could still meet the January deadline.

Additional members (including those from Baltimore City and Queen Anne’s County) said that while the delay of the release of 2020 Census data would make things tight, that they could “make it work” under the current timeline. The Harford County CFG member noted that while this is new territory for her, she would try to make it work.

Ms. Zhao mentioned that the redistricting file would be released in Census Geography, and not in TAZs – adding an additional step to get to TAZ population and household counts from the 2020 Census data release. Mr. Kimberly stated that in an effort to assist CFG Round 10 work, BMC staff can create a file that summarizes the 2020 Census data by the newly developed 2020 TAZs (to be completed in June 2021). The goal will be to complete this data aggregation task quickly (upon release of the redistricting file), and serve it to CFG membership as soon as it is complete.

Mr. Bronow said that work on Round 10 can begin prior to the release of the 2020 Census redistricting file. The pieces to support the employment estimates and forecasts will be in place long before the redistricting data is released – allowing work to begin on that piece earlier. And there is some preliminary work on the population and households sections that can be completed as well.

Mr. Kimberly agreed, and added that membership could begin to think about their jurisdictional level population and household forecasts – even without having the finalized 2020 Census numbers in place. CFG membership can look at the Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program data from 2010 through July 2020 in order to get a sense of what the 2020 Census figure is likely to resemble. This could be used as the basis of a jurisdictional level forecasting exercise – allowing CFG members to begin to build in assumptions about development activity and growth policy. The draft 2020 jurisdictional level figure could then be replaced by actual 2020 Census data when it is made available.

Mr. Kimberly also reminded the group that BMC’s updated data sharing agreement with the Maryland Department of Labor delivers point-level QCEW data on a regular basis. While the files are in a raw state (and do not contain the adjustments made by CFG membership in their 2Q 2019 QCEW file review) they could be used to help determine the location and concentration of pandemic related employment impacts. This might be helpful to CFG members looking for a way to quantify and demonstrate pandemic impacts on employment estimates at the TAZ level.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 A.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members

Jeff Bronow, Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne’s County Department of Public Works
Kathleen Comber, Carroll County Department of Planning
Lynda Eisenberg, Carroll County Department of Planning
Deborah Grant, Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning
Sara Paraniyam, Baltimore City Department of Planning
Al Sundara, Maryland Department of Planning

James Wilkerson, Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning
Jamie Williams, Baltimore City Department of Planning
Kui Zhao, Baltimore County Department of Planning

Staff and Guests

Charles Baber, BMC

Blake Fisher, BMC

Greg Goodwin, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Don Halligan, BMC

Shawn Kimberly, BMC

Crystal McDermott, BMC