



NAACP *National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People*

Washington, DC Branch

1000 U Street, NW • Suite 100 • Washington, DC 20001

September 1, 2022

Olivia Dedner
Chief of External Affairs
District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

Dear Olivia,

I trust that this letter finds you safe & well. This is a note from Neil Boyer, Environment and Climate Justice Committee for the Washington DC branch of the NAACP. We would like to thank you for providing the opportunity to have a Zoom meeting with you and your team on July 18th. We would like to request a further meeting to follow up on the measures discussed at that meeting. We understand that your office is in the process of putting together requests for the FY 24 budget. As you know, in our previous discussions we requested that DDOT use some of the federal and local resources allocated to improve transportation infrastructure in the district to also reduce resident exposure to Traffic-Related Air Pollution (TRAP). This is critical for those areas of the city where exposure to TRAP has resulted in adverse public health outcomes, namely in residential areas adjacent to I-295, I-395, Suitland Parkway, and New York Avenue (as well as other high-volume traffic corridors located in lower-income areas of the city). We also requested active community engagement in the design and implementation of interventions funded by these resources and aimed at reducing TRAP. The Campaign team would very much like to participate as stakeholders as your agencies plan current and future budget requests that could support implementation of some of the recommendations for pollution mitigation along high traffic corridors, especially those in low-income minority neighborhoods.

In the context of the issues cited above, we were recently made aware that WMATA intends to remodel its Shepherd Parkway bus garage to include new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling infrastructure. The proposed remodel will shift many of WMATA's CNG buses to the community, contribute more fossil fuel powered traffic, result in additional TRAP, and compound adverse health impacts in Ward 8 and along the I-295 corridor. Furthermore, this project represents a troubling new foothold for fossil gas infrastructure in Ward 8 and will stymie efforts to ensure clean public transportation for DC's most vulnerable commuters and residents. Furthermore, the WMATA proposal, if implemented, would undermine its stated commitment to electrify its bus fleet and reduce its carbon footprint. This proposal is especially concerning due to its potential public health impacts on a disadvantaged community that is already disproportionately impacted by TRAP. This development further illustrates the need for greater community involvement in decisions related to TRAP and public health.

In addition, sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure that a baseline of information on TRAP-related adverse health outcomes for residents of the aforementioned communities is established as well. Such a baseline could identify the current levels of TRAP, as well as TRAP-

related morbidity and mortality rates (especially for vulnerable low-income people living close to high-traffic corridors).

In light of the above, our 'ask' is that DDOT & DOEE create a mechanism to monitor and track health outcomes associated with TRAP (e.g. respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease) especially in communities at risk adjacent to I-295, I-395 and New York Avenue. This may require coordination with DC Health as they are the agency with the expertise to assess health indicators and conduct surveillance. Under the assumption that improving public health outcomes remains a priority of the current Bowser administration, establishing this baseline is critical to provide measures of progress towards the goal of reducing harmful exposures to TRAP. This is especially important to those residents at risk in Wards 5, 7 & 8. We also strongly urge that DDOT and DOEE recommend that the District Government's representatives on the WMATA Board call for WMATA staff to suspend its proposal to locate new CNG fueling infrastructure at this Metrobus garage and consider replacing older diesel-powered Metrobuses in the garage's fleet with new electric Metrobuses instead.

Thank you in advance for your continued willingness to meet with us to discuss these important transport related public health issues. We look forward to continued collaboration on this matter and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Best Regards,


Neil Boyer

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