

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

Suite 300, 777 North Capitol Street, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002-4239 202-962-3358 Fax: 202-962-3203

January 8, 2014

Honorable Patrick Wojahn, Chair
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Chair Wojahn:

Thank you for providing an opportunity to the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) to comment on the draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (December 12, 2013).

MWAQC commends the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) for its three year effort to develop the plan and proactively engage stakeholders. We hope TPB will move to adopt the plan [and will begin taking steps to implement the plan](#) in early 2014.

MWAQC supports the draft plan because it provides a path forward for a sustainable transportation approach in the Washington region [by establishing regional transportation priorities and using them as a guide for development of programs and projects for future inclusion in the region's Constrained Long-Range Plan \(CLRP\)](#). The plan focuses strongly on transit-oriented development and seeks to accommodate future growth in the Regional Activity Centers. This will help alleviate traffic congestion and crowding and reduce growth in regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) resulting in the improvement of air quality and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which are also Region Forward objectives.

MWAQC likes the plan's strategies to promote electric vehicles and commute alternatives, to expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, to develop the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and to introduce express toll lanes in the region. These strategies will help reduce criteria pollutant levels and greenhouse gas emissions in the region. [We also hope that TPB will also consider opportunities to reduce emissions in the region from commuter rail operations, commercial aviation, and construction.](#)

MWAQC agrees with the need for continued funding for the metro system to maintain its infrastructure and reliability, which is a critical element of the plan. A reliable metro system encourages people to use it more, reducing VMT and emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases.

Although MWAQC supports the plan's broad goal to enhance environmental quality and protect natural and cultural resources, we recommend additional actions to achieve these goals. There should be more emphasis on reducing growth in VMT, which shows an increasing trend in the future years. We recommend promoting alternative fueled vehicles in addition to hybrids and electric vehicles as they offer potential to further reduce emissions. While emissions of precursors of ozone and fine particles such as, volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NOx), fine particulate matter (PM2.5-pri), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and sulfur dioxide (SO2) have been on the decline, yet strategies and measures to achieve further reductions may be needed to meet current and potentially more stringent future ozone and fine particle standards.

[TPB's 2013 CLRP Performance Analysis shows and increasing trend in greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions](#)

from the transportation sector. This trend is expected to continue in the future due to anticipated population and economic growth in the region. MWAQC is concerned about this increasing trend in GHG emissions in the future and hopes that that the plan will include additional strategies and measures to reduce GHG emissions. This will be critical to meet MWCOG's climate change goals.

All of the efforts outlined above will not only help address MWAQC's air quality and MWCOG's climate change goals, but also the goals outlined by the Region Forward Coalition Compact.

MWAQC appreciates the effort TPB is undertaking in engaging various stakeholders in the development of the plan. We would like to work with TPB in coming years to ensure success of this plan.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

Sincerely,

Hon. Dave Snyder, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee