



## METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIR QUALITY COMMITTEE (MWAQC)

February 28, 2024  
12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.  
Virtual Meeting

Chair: Kenny Boddye, Prince William County

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### MWAQC MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

- Kenny Boddye, Prince William County (Chair)
- Tom Dernoga, Prince George’s County (Vice Chair)
- Dave Snyder, City of Falls Church (Vice Chair)
- Keith Anderson, District of Columbia
- Hannah Ashenafi, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Tom Ballou, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Collin Burell, District of Columbia
- Virginia Burke, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Sophia Cortazzo, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Susan Cunningham, Arlington County
- Shana Fulcher, City of Takoma Park
- Jason Groth, Charles County
- Jacob Hernandez, City of College Park
- Alan Hew, City of College Park
- Julie Kimmel, ACPAC Chair
- Meagan Landis, Prince William County
- Keith Levchenko, Montgomery County
- Kristin Mink, Montgomery County
- John Morrill, Fairfax County
- Amalia Pleake-Tamm, Calvert County
- Jim Ponticello, Virginia Department of Transportation

- Evandro Santos, Prince William County
- Kari Snyder, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Meredith Soniat, District Department of Transportation
- Roger Thunell, Maryland Department of the Environment

#### OTHERS

- Tad Aburn, Citizen
- Maryann Carroll, Region 3 EPA Office of Public Affairs
- Andrew Debraggio, District of Columbia
- Richard Dooley, Arlington County
- Thatch Gerike, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Tianni Ivey, Loudoun County
- Amy Knesel, City of Greenbelt
- Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Monae Scott, District of Columbia

#### COG STAFF

- Kelsey Boatwright, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Alissa Boggs, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Leah Boggs, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Robert Christopher, COG Department of Environmental Programs

- Jen Desimone, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Jeff King, COG Climate, Energy, and Air Program Director
- Sunil Kumar, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Tim Masters, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Mark Moran, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Wanda Owens, COG Department of Transportation Planning
- Jane Posey, COG Department of Transportation Planning
- Kanti Srikanth, COG Deputy Executive Director for Metropolitan Planning
- Dusan Vuksan, COG Department of Transportation Planning

## 1. WELCOME, PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, APPROVE MINUTES

*Kenny Boddye, MWAQC Chair*

Chair Kenny Boddye called the meeting to order, and the December MWAQC meeting summary was approved without any changes. Tad Aburn (private citizen/former Chair of MWAQC-TAC) provided public comment. Tad Aburn expressed concerns regarding the Environmental Justice (EJ) Subcommittee's public participation process. Mr. Aburn criticized the lack of representation from EJ communities and said that the progress made since initial discussions has been too slow. Mr. Aburn highlighted difficulties in participating as a stakeholder and urged policymakers to address these issues. Public comments can be found in the [meeting materials](#).

## 2. COMMITTEE REPORTS

MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Roger Thunell (MDE)

MWAQC-TAC held a call on February 13:

- On MWAQC-TAC's last call, state air agencies of the District and Maryland provided the status of their requests to EPA to grant exceptional exemption for high ozone days in 2023. As of now, Virginia doesn't need to request this exemption.
- City of Denver staff briefed members on Denver's "Love My Air" program, which could be considered as a model program by EPA. The program employs a sensor network that monitors air quality at several schools. It pairs monitoring with educational programming, provides real-time air quality information, and has partnerships with Denver agencies and community organizations.
- COG staff provided an update to members on the stakeholder engagement conducted for the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) as part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) effort.
- COG staff briefed members on the tree canopy goals recommendation.
- COG staff briefed members on the status of the Regional Electric Vehicle Deployment (REVD) strategy.
- TPB staff briefed members on plans to use MOVES4 for the upcoming Visualize 2050 Air Quality Conformity Analysis. Staff discussed the main differences between EPA's MOVES3 and MOVES4 models, including preliminary sensitivity analysis results between the two models.
- Antoine Thompson of Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC) will join the subcommittee as a stakeholder for 2024.

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) – Julie Kimmel (ACPAC Chair)

ACPAC held a webinar meeting on January 22:

- At the February MWAQC Executive Committee meeting, six new members were approved and

appointed to ACPAC. There were 22 applications to fill the six seats (three from DC, two from VA, and one from MD). With those 6 seats filled, ACPAC has a full committee of 18 members.

- In December after a call for volunteers, former ACPAC Chair Era Pandya appointed three members to the EJ subcommittee. ACPAC Chair Julie Kimmel, ACPAC Vice Chair Bill Washburn, and Dr. Jacqueline Norris were appointed to the subcommittee.
- At the January ACPAC meeting, members discussed developing a list of recommendations the committee could put forth to MWAQC and CEEPC. Three committee members were tasked with developing the list, which will be reviewed and discussed at ACPAC's March meeting.
- While the EJ Subcommittee is working on the EJ Action Plan, ACPAC will be working on the EJ Toolkit which will focus on outreach strategies and best practices to effectively engage with the community and communication approaches. ACPAC will also be working with a consultant on this work and COG staff is in the process of getting one on board to start the work.

#### Clean Air Partners – Jen Desimone (COG Staff)

Clean Air Partners have been involved in the following:

- Clean Air Partners is in the process of planning this year's summer campaign. The campaign will be kicked-off during Air Quality Awareness Week (the first week of May), with the announcement of a gas-powered lawn equipment exchange. The Exchange will take place during the middle through the end of May. Residents will be able to bring gas-powered equipment into participating Ace Hardware stores in exchange for new electric equipment. Available equipment for exchange will include lawn mowers, weed trimmers, and leaf blowers. The gas-powered equipment will be taken to a recycling partner to be disposed of. The exchange will also be accompanied by Clean Air Partners backyard bubble events, which includes an exhibit to educate the public about ways to reduce emissions related to lawn and gardening.
- The month of August will be designated as Ozone Action Month. To heighten awareness during the hottest time of the summer, Clean Air Partners will be traveling around the Baltimore-Washington region with their interactive Eco-Driving exhibit (car bubble) to educate residents on how to reduce vehicle emissions.

#### Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – Jeff King (COG Climate, Energy, and Air Program Director on behalf of CEEPC leadership)

CEEPC held a webinar meeting on January 24:

- At the last CEEPC meeting, members heard updates from various subcommittees including the Regional Electric Vehicle Deployment (REVD) Working Group, and Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee, along with member updates.
- New CEEPC Chair Jolene Ivey, Prince George's County, outlined priorities for the year, followed by staff updates on legislative work and a presentation on the CPRG initiative for the metropolitan Washington area. Focus shifted to finalizing the PCAP, which is due Friday, March 1. Staff will then pivot to CPRG implementation project proposals, which are due April 1, as part of a comprehensive plan for 2030 and 2050, aiming for net zero emissions by 2050.

### **3. LOCAL AND STATE UPDATES**

#### *Local Members and State Air Agencies*

- Jacob Hernandez (City of College Park) said that College Park is establishing a rebate program, encouraging the purchase or trade in of gas leaf blowers. The committee working on this program is looking for input on best practices for these types of initiatives. Kristin Mink (Montgomery County) said that the DC Sustainable Energy Utility (DC SEU) assisted Montgomery County in transitioning away from gas-powered leaf blowers. While primarily DC-based, DC SEU extended support to Montgomery County, aiding in their energy initiatives.
- Roger Thunell (Maryland Department of the Environment) said that MDE is preparing for the upcoming ozone season by ensuring equipment and monitors are ready. He made note of the

wildfires to the south as a concern. Monitoring Supreme Court and EPA actions, particularly regarding “good neighbor” legal processes and interactions with Pennsylvania.

- Kenny Boddy (Prince William County) said that Prince William County’s transportation department is actively pursuing grants. The county has also begun its budget season and has allocated funds for the Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan. County efforts include installing solar panels on buildings and electrifying parts of the county’s vehicle fleet.
- Tom Ballou (Virginia Department of Environmental Quality) said that VDEQ is developing multiple State Implementation Plans (SIPs) focusing on air quality standards and regional haze. VDEQ is also finalizing their statewide PCAP for submission as part of the CPRG program, showcasing their commitment to environmental initiatives alongside other ongoing projects.
- Hannah Ashenafi (District Department of Energy and Environment) said that DOEE is expanding a hyperlocal air quality monitoring pilot in the District, outfitting a mobile unit with air quality monitors. Last year’s pilot covered three neighborhoods; they are planning to add at least six more this year for an extended duration. DOEE is also engaging with selected neighborhoods through public meetings scheduled for March. DOEE is applying for non-competitive IRA monitoring grants by April 8 to secure additional monitoring funding. Finally, DOEE is also working on their exceptional events request, with a recent hearing and one comment received, finalization underway for submission to EPA.

#### **4. AIR QUALITY PLANNING UPDATES**

*Sunil Kumar, COG Environmental Engineer*

Sunil Kumar provided an update on the following air quality items:

##### **A. Exceptional Event Request**

During the 2023 Ozone Season, smoke from Canadian wildfires contributed to ozone standard violations in the region. The draft Design Value, determining compliance with the 2015 ozone NAAQS, was impacted. However, an Exceptional Events Exemption Request process with EPA may mitigate this issue. States are preparing analyses for submission, aiming to exclude affected days’ data from the Design Value calculation. The District is requesting exemption for three high ozone days, while Maryland and Virginia are not, as their monitors didn’t show violations. Approval is expected in summer, potentially averting NAAQS violations.

##### **B. Revised PM2.5 Standard**

On February 7, 2024, EPA announced a stricter fine particle (PM2.5) standard, reducing the annual primary standard from 12.0 to 9.0 ug/m<sup>3</sup>. Other PM2.5 standards remained unchanged. Adjustments to the Air Quality Index and PM2.5 monitoring requirements were made. The network design now considers environmental justice factors to protect communities from disproportionate air pollution risks. The stricter standard is projected to yield significant public health benefits, including \$46 billion in net benefits by 2032, with up to 4,500 fewer premature deaths, 800,000 fewer asthma cases, and 290,000 fewer lost workdays. Control costs for this standard were estimated at \$590 million in 2032.

Discussion:

- EPA will designate areas as non-attainment based on data from 2022 through 2024. With the current PM2.5 standard at 9.0 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, this year’s data is crucial. One monitor is already at the 9.0 level, which is significant. It’s a near-road monitor, designed for higher road impact assessment. This complicates designation criteria, necessitating careful monitoring and analysis to ensure compliance.
- Prior to 2019, strict control measures at state and local levels led to reduced fine particle concentrations. However, in 2019, wildfires caused an increase. Similarly, in 2021, July 4 fireworks and smoke from Canadian wildfires contributed to elevated PM2.5 levels. Overall, implementation of control measures has helped maintain low levels, despite occasional spikes

from external factors like wildfires and fireworks.

- There was a request for a chart that clarifies the impact of the Canada wildfires on PM2.5 levels, aiming to explain to the public the fluctuations seen in recent years. However, EPA regulations limit data revisions to points of regulatory significance, so even if wildfires caused spikes, data cannot be altered. This discrepancy results in artificially high numbers. Despite this, there's a desire to provide the public with a clear narrative accompanying the data to ensure proper understanding. The importance of contextualizing the data for the public was emphasized.
- Additionally, members pointed out that the impact of wildfires on this data highlights the significance of global warming. It underscores the urgent need to address this issue due to its substantial effects.

## 5. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

*Tim Masters, COG Environmental Planner*

The CEEPC Legislative Committee is actively engaged during the legislative season, primarily from January to April, focusing on initiatives in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Their priorities encompass various areas such as climate mitigation, climate resilience, and air quality. In Virginia, 2024's efforts include advocating for green finance bills and addressing data center energy efficiency standards. Meanwhile, Maryland's focus for 2024 is on energy efficiency standards and green infrastructure funding. In the District of Columbia, bills aim to expand electric vehicle infrastructure and introduce environmental impact assessments. The committee welcomes inquiries and feedback to ensure effective legislative advocacy.

Discussion:

- There was an inquiry about any Virginia bills proposing the establishment of a statewide commission, akin to the Maryland Clean Energy Center, to oversee innovative financing projects. For the 2024 session, COG staff have not seen any bills that establish such a commission. This is important since federal funding can flow through state energy offices or air agencies. Maryland has the Maryland Clean Energy Center, representing state interests in clean energy, capable of leading grant applications. However, Virginia lacks such an agency, prompting interest in establishing one for statewide grant applications. COG assists but emphasizes it's not their primary mission. There is a significant opportunity for Virginia to consider establishing an agency eligible to lead large grant applications. Members expressed frustration with the lack of a centralized approach for distributing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction funds.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN AIR QUALITY PLANNING

*Robert Christopher, COG Environmental Planner*

In May 2023, MWAQC set objectives to advance environmental justice (EJ) and equitable regional policies. They established an Environmental Justice Subcommittee in September 2023 to develop an Action Plan addressing EJ in air quality planning. By December 2023, MWAQC approved project activities and membership structures. The plan aims to integrate equity into air quality policy execution, project management, and program development. The Environmental Justice Subcommittee will lead the plan's creation, incorporating feedback from stakeholders. Implementation and enforcement will be handled locally and statewide. The subcommittee's role is to develop regional policies and initiatives, collaborating with stakeholders to integrate equity into air quality-related policies, programs, and projects. The project's goal is to deliver the final action plan to members by December 2024, with a sunset date set one year from the kickoff meeting. Contractor proposals are currently being reviewed. Next steps include project kickoff and engagements with the committee. Subcommittee formation and survey discussions will lead to action plan development with contractors.

Discussion:

- A question was raised about adjusting the timeline for the final action plan to align with a year

from the subcommittee's first meeting. There were concerns about public inclusion and expertise in EJ on the subcommittee. Broader public engagement and inclusion of impacted voices is important.

## **7. AIR QUALITY & TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON**

*Sunil Kumar, COG Environmental Engineer*

Sunil provided an overview of the structure, which includes the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), established in 1992 as the region's air quality planning entity. MWAQC's role involves preparing and revising State Implementation Plans (SIPs), demonstrating compliance with federal air quality standards, and collaborating with various entities. Sunil outlined the criteria pollutants and sources, such as stationary and mobile sources. Additionally, Sunil discussed the historical context, membership composition, and organizational structure of MWAQC, emphasizing its role in regional air quality planning and public engagement. The presentation covers data monitoring, compliance status, and future goals regarding air quality standards. MWAQC is involved in efforts to reduce emissions, address climate change, and provide resources for stakeholders interested in air quality initiatives.

*Jane Posey, COG Transportation Engineer*

Jane discussed the role of the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the metropolitan Washington region. Jane provided an overview of the TPB's planning area and member jurisdictions, highlighting recent changes due to census data. The TPB is mandated to develop regional long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs, ensuring consistency with federal air quality standards. Jane explained the process of developing mobile emissions inventories and setting motor vehicle emissions budgets, crucial for air quality conformity analysis. Jane also emphasized the importance of conformity analysis in securing federal funding for transportation projects consistent with air quality plans. Jane went on to discuss the technical process of conformity analysis, involving travel demand modeling and mobile emissions estimation. The presentation included graphs illustrating emissions inventories and mobile budgets for nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. Additionally, Jane touched on GHG emissions estimation and the region's efforts to address climate change. Jane concluded by outlining upcoming updates to the region's long-range transportation plan and solicited feedback from members.

## **8. ADJOURN**

*Kenny Boddye, MWAQC Chair*

Chair Kenny Boddye adjourned the meeting. The next MWAQC meeting will be an in-person meeting and is scheduled for May 22, 2024.