

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SUBCOMMITTEE

Draft Meeting Summary: September 20, 2024

<p><b>EJ Subcommittee Members in Attendance:</b>          Hon. Dave Snyder, Co-Chair          Hon. Kristin Mink, Co-Chair          Kenny Boddye, Prince William County          Hon. Tom Dernoga, Prince George's County          Joseph Jakuta, DOEE          Julie Kimmel, ACPAC          Danielle Simms, VA DEQ          Noble Smith, MDE</p> <p><b>Additional Attendees:</b>          Tauhirah Abdul-Matin, AECOM          Wesley Darden, Office of Montgomery County          Councilmember Kristin Mink</p>	<p><b>COG Staff:</b>          Alissa Boggs, COG DEP          Leah Boggs, COG DEP          Heidi Bonnaffon, COG DEP          Robert Christopher, COG DEP          Robert d'Abadie, COG DTP          Jen Desimone, COG DEP          Jeff King, COG DEP          Sunil Kumar, COG DEP          Dusan Vuksan, COG DTP</p>
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### 1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY, FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF MEETING – PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

*Kristin Mink, Co-Chair*

Co-chair Mink called the meeting to order; introductions were given, and the prior meeting summary was approved.

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

*COG Staff and AECOM*

COG Staff and AECOM provided a summary of public comments and feedback collected from the listening sessions. Public comment was provided on the problem definition and work of the committee thus far.

#### A. Summary of Comments and Input from Listening Sessions:

During the listening sessions, participants emphasized the need for increased public engagement and timely communication, underscoring the importance of involving communities in air quality initiatives. There was significant interest in monitoring indoor air quality, ensuring that these efforts do not burden at-risk communities. Attendees expressed concerns about specific emission sources, particularly diesel traffic and idling trucks, contributing substantially to local pollution. They highlighted pollutants such as metals, black carbon, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), particulate matter, and dust as critical areas of concern. Severe pollution in places like Ivy City and Cheverly was brought to attention, emphasizing the urgent need for action in these communities. Participants

called for stronger community involvement and real-time emission reductions, advocating for adopting clean technologies and stricter regulatory controls to address these environmental challenges effectively.

## **B. Public Comments on Problem Definition and Strategies:**

A public commenter suggested revising the problem definition to ensure that the responsibility for addressing public health risks is shared among government agencies, businesses, and the community rather than burdening affected communities. The commenter identified key issues in Environmental Justice (EJ) areas, including a high number of diesel vehicles and rampant illegal idling, significantly deteriorating air quality. Concerns about releasing toxic fugitive dust containing harmful substances like asbestos and heavy metals were also raised. Additionally, EJ areas are overwhelmed by numerous polluting businesses, both large and small, exacerbating environmental health risks. The commenter recommended enforcing existing laws on illegal idling and dust emissions and proposed enhanced inspection and enforcement using resource-efficient tools developed by agencies like MDE. They asserted that addressing these issues could improve air quality in EJ areas by up to 50%. The commenter urged for continued and collaborative action to protect communities disproportionately affected by poor air quality, emphasizing the necessity for immediate interventions.

## **3. DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM DEFINITION**

### *Co-Chairs and Members*

The committee reviewed and discussed the draft problem definition for their Environmental Justice Air Quality Action Plan. The primary focus was on whether to include indoor air quality issues. Members acknowledged the importance of indoor air quality but agreed to concentrate on outdoor air quality due to regulatory authority limitations and capacity constraints. They decided to focus on outdoor air for the current problem definition while leaving the possibility open to addressing indoor air in the future.

The committee then examined the language of the problem definition to ensure it did not imply that the burden of addressing air quality issues falls on the impacted communities. They emphasized that the responsibility should primarily lie with the government and that the communities should be empowered to advocate for practical solutions. Members suggested removing sentences that indicated communities lack awareness or capability and instead focused on government action and community empowerment.

There was also a discussion about including "business" as a responsible party in the problem definition. Some members felt involving businesses in the solution was necessary, while others were concerned about overstepping authority. The committee ultimately agreed to reference "government and partnerships" to encompass various stakeholders without specifically naming businesses.

After making the revisions, including adjustments to the wording for clarity and emphasis on government responsibility and community empowerment, the committee approved the revised problem definition through a motion and seconded vote with no objections. The revised definition is as follows:

Certain communities in the metropolitan Washington region experience disproportionate health risks (and impacts on quality of life) from acute, chronic, and cumulative exposure to higher levels of various air and other pollutants. Residents need to be protected. They should not carry the burden of addressing these problems. There is a need for immediate and long-term government and partnership action to mitigate these effects and to empower and build capacity in the communities to advocate for effective action.

Efforts to address the problem should be done with an understanding of the EPA definition of Environmental Justice:

**“Environmental justice** means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

- are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and
- have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.”

(Source: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice#definitions>)

#### **4. DISCUSSION OF COMPLETE LIST, SCREENING CRITERIA, AND PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

*MWAQC Staff, Subcommittee Co-Chair, and Members*

COG staff presented their proposed approach for developing a list of priority strategies and actions for inclusion in the Environmental Justice Air Quality Action Plan. The staff recommended utilizing a method previously employed in developing control measures for State Implementation Plans (SIPs). This involves creating a comprehensive "complete list" of potential actions, drawing from existing resources like the Reasonably Available Control Measures (RACM) package developed in 2006-2007, which already includes many of the public's concerns, such as idling and future development.

Staff suggested that committee members review this complete list over the next month to identify and highlight actions that could be moved to a "priority list." The criteria for prioritization would include feasibility, authority, funding, and potential impact. The goal is to develop a strong priority list within two to three months, categorizing actions into short-term and long-term and detailing implementation plans.

The timeline discussed aims to complete the final action plan by February, with a draft ready by December to allow for additional stakeholder engagement and listening sessions. Committee members emphasized the importance of starting with existing research and best practices to expedite the process. They also considered treating the action plan as a living document, allowing for future updates and additions.

The committee agreed to move forward with the proposed framework, focusing on building the complete list using existing research, public input, and best practices. They plan to reconvene to discuss narrowing down the list using agreed-upon criteria.

#### **5. PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON MEETING DISCUSSION**

A member of the public expressed strong support for the proposed approach to develop a complete list and a prioritized action list, noting that this method has been effective in the past. They emphasized the importance of addressing cumulative exposure to multiple pollutants in environmental justice areas, specifically highlighting diesel particulate matter as a significant but under-regulated pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

The commenter suggested that the complete list should include measures that call for federal

action, such as revising enforcement guidance to states to focus on increased inspection and enforcement efforts in environmental justice areas. They also discussed the challenge of determining where to implement the action list and proposed a phased approach, starting with the highest priority areas—similar to how the Clean Air Act categorizes regions by severity levels.

The commenter commended the committee and staff for their significant progress and hard work over the past month. They encouraged continued collaboration with the public through broad listening sessions and engaging with dedicated advocates and community members who have expressed willingness to assist. They concluded by expressing optimism about the positive direction in which the committee's work is moving.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

*Kristin Mink, Co-Chair*

The meeting was adjourned.

*All meeting materials including speaker presentations can be found on the MWCOG website by clicking the link below -*

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2024/9/25/ej-subcommittee/>

**The next EJ Subcommittee meeting is October 24, 2024.**

Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials. For more information, visit: [www.mwcog.org/accommodations](http://www.mwcog.org/accommodations) or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD)