

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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January 10, 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 in early 2014 and report on progress towards these regional priorities in its Annual CLRP Performance Report.

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 policy resource for the development of future transportation and land use programs and projects in the region. 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 new cost effective transit systems such as, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), to connect Regional Activity Centers, and to introduce express toll lanes in the region. These strategies will help reduce criteria pollutant levels and greenhouse gas emissions in the region. Lastly we hope that TPB will also consider opportunities to reduce emissions in the region from all other transportation activities in the region.

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 (PM_{2.5-pri}), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂) have been on the decline, strategies and measures to achieve further reductions may be needed to meet current and potentially more stringent future ozone and fine particle standards.

MWAQC looks forward to working with TPB to meet both current and future air quality standards and

challenges, as described in the MWAQC air quality conformity comment letter dated July 10, 2013.

To ensure greater progress towards MWCOG's climate change goal, MWAQC hopes that the plan will include additional strategies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 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.

I also wish to make TPB aware that MWCOG staff is currently working on a special project, funded by Maryland with assistance from the District of Columbia, which will evaluate potential goals and needs for the region's transportation emissions. This is particularly important since additional actions may be needed to meet the current (75 ppb) ozone standard. As the project progresses, I anticipate that the project analysis will be shared with TPB.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. Snyder', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Dave Snyder, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee