



AIR AND CLIMATE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 28, 2022
5:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

DRAFT TELECONFERENCE MEETING SUMMARY

ACPAC ATTENDEES: Audrey-Joy Nwaze, James Wang, Elizabeth Spike, Peter Mecca, Claire August, Era Pandya

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES: George Aburn

COG STAFF: Leah Boggs, Robert Christopher, Jeff King

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair, Era Pandya

The meeting was called to order, introductions were made by members, and COG staff. The September 19, 2022, meeting summary was approved with no amendments.

Vice Chair Pandya announced that she received from COG Staff a letter and other related documents from George Aburn, a member of the public. Mr. Aburn requested that the items be circulated to ACPAC members and for ACPAC to consider allowing him and others to provide public comments to the Committee. The Vice Chair will review the materials and will get back to COG staff and ACPAC members about next steps after the meeting.

2. CLIMATE AND ENERGY LEADERSHIP AWARDS

A short video of the [2022 Climate and Energy Leadership Awards](#) recipients was played.

3. URBAN INSTITUTE

Anna Shipp, Urban Institute

Judah Axelrod, Urban Institute

Chitra Balakrishnan, Urban Institute

The Urban Institute discussed their recently released [framing paper](#) that synthesizes an assessment of the federal [Justice40 Initiative](#). The briefing also included an overview of a forthcoming report that provides a comparative review and analysis of existing national, state, and local environmental justice data tools.

The [Shared Prosperity Partnership](#) is a collaborative project between the Urban Institute, the Kresge Foundation, and the Brookings Institution to support communities seeking to achieve inclusive urban growth and prosperity for all. The goal of the project is to help federal government partners achieve the Justice40 Initiative goals of equity, climate action, and economic health. The project highlights challenges and opportunities and offers recommendations on how to position the initiative for success and expand Justice40's impact and scope.

Identified challenges include:

- Identifying, engaging, and prioritizing communities
- Program design and funding structure.
- Defining and measuring benefits.

Recommendations include:

- Improve the methodology used to identify “disadvantaged” communities. Revise the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to account for race, current and projected climate impacts, and cumulative burdens. Establish a fair and expedited process for communities to petition their designations.
- Revise the structure of funding to make Justice40 programs across all federal agencies accessible and inclusive. Reduce application burdens and make funding more accessible to enable lesser-resources localities to compete. Allocate appropriate time for planning and community engagement. Design programs and incentives to create long-lasting change rather than quick wins. Remove cost-sharing requirements for the most “disadvantaged” communities.
- Refine and expand existing guidance on how federal agencies should implement Justice40 programs. Create clear, consistent, and enforceable selection criteria prioritizing projects that holistically advance equity, climate action, and economic health. Ensure that formula and other funds are spent in accordance with Justice40 principles. Provide detailed guidance on what benefits “count” and metrics to track those benefits. Proactively conduct outreach and channel investments to communities carrying the greatest burdens.

The [Climate and Economic Justice Screen Tool](#) (CEJST) developed by the White House Council on Environmental Quality and EPA's [EJScreen tool](#) are the two most recognized EJ screening tools. The federal tools, along with several state and local tools exist, there is no comprehensive review of all the existing screening tools. Urban Institute's research report, [Screening for Environmental Justice: A Framework for Comparing National, State, and Local Data Tools](#), provides a framework for comparing EJ screening tools and assessing relative advantages & disadvantages. The research surveyed 2 national tools, 23 state tools and 6 county, metro, and city-level tools.

The key findings include:

- Tools often lack local context and are out of date
 - Special concerns for quality of environmental data, e.g., EJScreen's National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA)-based indicators
- Most screening tools include environmental indicators, but many key topics are overlooked
 - 77% of tools include environmental data; however, few tools include projected hazards resulting from climate change
- Many tools insufficiently reflect real community data and needs
 - Urban bias

Report recommendations for existing and new tools include:

- Be explicit about the intended use of tools
- Allow for communities to self-identify
- Include more regularly updated indicators across diverse topic areas

Discussion

- Member Peter Mecca offered discussion around engaging individual communities in ways that are reflective and respectful of the community's culture, as well as using non-western ways of assessing data.
- COG Staff Leah Boggs offered the recent example of the water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi due to federal neglect of the city's water infrastructure systems and asked if UI screened EJ tools based on federal or state-level funding support. The tool points out the importance of allowing communities to self-identify specific environmental issues they are facing.
- Member Elizabeth Spike asked about the process of getting the data into the hands of local community organizations. Ideally, the tools should be developed in conjunction with community members, so they would be aware of them.
- George Aburn discussed the importance of using programs like Justice40 to balance long term policy decisions with short term environmental racial injustices being seen currently. He also pointed out the local air quality analysis lead by Dr. Sacoby Wilson at the University of Maryland.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TOOLKIT UPDATE PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

Era Pandya, ACPAC Vice Chair

Leah Boggs, COG Staff

ACPAC Members

Vice Chair Pandya and Leah Boggs reviewed staff's comments on the EJ Toolkit proposal, pointing out that the committee needs a draft final by January. The final proposal will be presented to the MWAQC in February for approval. The proposal may go through additional review by the Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee and BEEAC the Built Environment and Energy Advisory Committee if there is time before MWAQC's approval in February. The draft proposal will be made available on a shared drive for easy access and input from committee members.

5. NEW COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP AND 2023 RECRUITMENT

Era Pandya, Vice Chair

Leah Boggs, COG Staff

Leah Boggs reviewed the responsibility of the New Officer Nominating Subcommittee. The subcommittee is responsible for nominating a slate of candidates for the Chair and Vice Chair positions for the coming year (2023). Vice Chair Pandya appointed James Wang (MD), Elizabeth Spike (VA), and Claire August (DC) to the subcommittee. The subcommittee nominees accepted and will submit the list to the full committee before the January 23 meeting. A vote will take place on January 23, 2023.

The 2023 recruitment campaign is open from November 15, 2022 to January 13, 2023. The committee is recruiting for 2 seats – 1 in DC and 1 in VA. Applicants will be invited to attend the January 23 meeting.

6. NEXT ACPAC MEETING AND ADJOURN

The next meeting is January 23, 2023.

All meeting materials including speaker presentations can be found on the committee page [here](#).