

DRAFT

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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September 24, 2008

Honorable Michael Knapp
Chair, Board of Directors
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol St NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Knapp:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the COG Climate Change Steering Committee (CCSC) Climate Change Report. MWAQC believes that the higher temperatures, longer heat waves, and change in precipitation patterns could have significant negative consequences for air quality. Recent studies suggest a potential 2 to 8 ppb ozone penalty from climate change in the Mid Atlantic, with associated health impacts on sensitive individuals in the region. MWAQC therefore strongly supports the recommendations in the report and urges all stakeholders in the region to take early action to begin to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. In particular, MWAQC encourages all local jurisdictions in the region to begin to develop policies and programs to reduce emissions from all sectors in the jurisdiction.

Steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions may provide significant air quality benefits. To this end, MWAQC urges stakeholders in the region to leverage investments and adopt technologies and practices that provide multipollutant benefits. In particular, MWAQC supports and encourages many of the recommendations listed in the report, including enhancing alternative modes of transportation, purchasing low-emitting vehicles, developing low-carbon fueling infrastructure, developing Green Building policies, enhancing tree canopy, and investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

MWAQC believes that some of the more important short-term actions include implementing the recommendations in the statewide Climate Action Plans being developed by Maryland, Virginia, and District; working with the Public Service Commissions and utilities to ensure equity in the region's Renewable Portfolio Standards; developing a regional high efficiency street lighting project; and seeking commitment of local jurisdictions to purchase 20 percent of their electricity needs from renewable Green Power. In addition, it will be important to take early action to focus on ways to address the existing built environment (e.g., energy efficiency retrofits, recycling building materials during renovation), as well as land use changes that could facilitate access to transit, jobs, and green housing. MWAQC also believes that public education and outreach will be critical component of any plan to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

To reduce emissions from the transportation sector, MWAQC urges the CCSC to more closely collaborate with the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board to determine the most cost effective ways to increase fuel efficiency of the region's fleets, increase available and use of alternative fuels, and to improve the efficiency of the transportation network. We understand many important programs are already providing significant cost-effective reductions, including telecommuting, carpooling, and transit incentive programs. These programs should be continued and strengthened, if possible. Finally, COG should develop strong advocacy positions that solicit the support of the federal government in providing for the research, development, and market commercialization of technologies needed to reduce emissions, such as clean vehicles and alternative fuels.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this historic report, and we look forward to working with you to solve these challenging problems facing our region, nation, and the world.

Sincerely,

Hon. David Snyder, Chair