



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

October 14, 2009

District of Columbia

*Bladensburg**

Bowie

College Park

Frederick

Frederick County

Gaithersburg

Greenbelt

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County

**Adjunct member*

The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Request of Support for Local Government Climate Action in Federal Legislation

Dear Chairman Boxer and Chairman Baucus:

The challenges before you to develop landmark legislation to address the risks posed by emissions of greenhouse gases and climate change are momentous. We applaud Congress for taking a leadership role in formulating a response to this global concern. As you advance this initiative, we urge you to introduce and support legislation that increases the percentage of greenhouse gas emission allowance revenue provided to local governments. By doing so, you will strengthen local and regional programs that address energy efficiency, renewable energy, and transportation planning to meet climate change goals.

Addressing climate change is a high priority for governments and communities in the National Capital Region. Since 2007, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)¹ has been taking aggressive steps to begin to address climate change. This year, COG has formed a Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) to lead regional initiatives on greenhouse gases and climate change. CEEPC is comprised of state and local elected officials, air, energy, and transportation agencies, and a number of stakeholders from academia, area electric and gas utilities, and environmental organizations.

CEEPC supports the concept of a national program to reduce the risks from climate change and reduce greenhouse gases. Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia have launched climate change initiatives, and the region, through COG, has worked together this past year to develop a regional climate plan.² While local and state actions are vital, they cannot solve the challenge by themselves without strong federal action. A comprehensive federal approach is essential for addressing climate change.

Members of Climate Communities, a national coalition of cities and counties promoting a strong local-federal partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, recently sent you a letter urging increased allocation of carbon allowance auction revenues for local governments. COG fully agrees. In fact, COG believes that any workable policy must

¹ MWCOG is a regional organization of Washington area local governments, comprised of 21 local governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives.

² <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/zldXXg20081203113034.pdf>

direct sufficient resources to local governments to implement their local clean energy and climate solutions. Local governments will be called upon to implement a wide range of programs and projects that reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Cities and counties will operate the transit systems that provide cleaner transportation options, write and enforce ordinances and codes that promote energy efficient buildings, renewable energy, and sustainable development, and foster and create the jobs which the new sustainable economy will require. Therefore, as the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee prepares to mark up clean energy and climate legislation (S.1733), we urge you to take steps to empower localities to achieve significant energy savings and emissions reductions. We hope the legislation will:

- Provide direct support for local clean energy solutions by allocating carbon trading allowances to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants;
- Enhance local transportation efficiency by allocating carbon trading allowances to finance additional investment in our mass transit and passenger rail systems; support development around transit stops; and make neighborhoods safer for bikes and pedestrians, as proposed in the Clean TEA legislation introduced by Senators Carper and Specter;
- Facilitate retooling of underutilized economic sites with new green jobs by allocating carbon trading allowances for Economic Development Administration redevelopment grants to local governments;
- Support local government adaptation planning by allocating carbon trading allowances to support local government initiatives to plan for the impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels, drought, wildfires, flooding, and storms; and
- Support local government green infrastructure, efficiency, and clean energy projects that reduce carbon emissions by ensuring their eligibility for offset credits.

We commend your ongoing leadership on federal climate policy and hope you will provide strong support for the essential role of local governments in addressing climate change.

Our members look forward to close consultation and cooperation with the USEPA, US DOE, USDOT and other agencies as appropriate as part of a local-state-federal partnership to meet the national and international climate change challenge.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially yours,

Penelope A. Gross, Chairman of the Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments