



September 10, 2021

Administrator Michael S. Regan  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Re: Support for the Proposed Rule to Revise Existing National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Passenger Cars and Light Trucks through Model Year 2026; Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2021-0208

Dear Administrator Regan:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC), and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), we are writing to offer our support for the proposed rule to revise existing national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks through Model Year (MY) 2026. We support your efforts to revise these standards to be more stringent than the Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule standards, and the proposed rule aligns with our 2021 Legislative Priorities.<sup>1</sup>

MWAQC is the air quality planning commission for the National Capital region certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop plans to attain federal standards for air quality and improve air quality. The TPB is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the National Capital Region jointly established by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia and so designated by the federal government. As an MPO, the TPB is mandated to conform with and integrate regional air quality plans in its transportation plans. COG is the association of local governments in metropolitan Washington and supports MWAQC and the TPB. CEEPC serves as the principal policy adviser on climate change to the COG Board of Directors and is tasked with the development of a regional climate change strategy to meet the region's goals for reducing GHG emissions.

In a letter dated October 17, 2018, MWAQC, CEEPC, and the TPB provided comment on the proposed SAFE Vehicles Rule for Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) and tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions standards for MY 2021-2026 passenger cars and light trucks.<sup>2</sup> Our committees strongly opposed the proposed changes to certain existing CAFE and tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions standards for passenger cars and light duty trucks and urged the EPA to maintain more stringent tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions standards for these vehicles as prescribed in the October 15, 2012 "Final Rule for 2017 and Later Model Year Light-Duty Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards."

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<sup>1</sup> "COG Legislative Priorities," Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, January 13, 2021, <https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2021/01/13/cog-legislative-priorities-legislative-priorities/>.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Riemer, Mary Lehman, and Charles Allen to Andrew Wheeler and Elaine Chao, "Comment on the Proposed SAFE Vehicle Rule for CAFE and Tailpipe Carbon Dioxide Emissions Standards for Model Year 2021-2026 Light-Duty Vehicles; Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0283," Letter, October 17, 2018.

The EPA's current proposal to strengthen federal GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks by setting stringent requirements for reductions through MY 2026 would provide the critical leadership needed for our region to work towards meeting adopted environmental goals and standards. We agree that this comprehensive federal program will achieve significant GHG emissions reductions and will result in substantial public health and welfare benefits, while providing consumers with savings from lower fuel costs. As noted in the *Metropolitan Washington 2030 Climate and Energy Action Plan*, underserved communities have been disproportionately affected by environmental exposures, such as ambient air pollution and climate-change-related health impacts; therefore, more stringent universal GHG emissions standards and subsequent emissions reductions have the potential to help the most vulnerable populations.

Poor air quality affects the residents living and working in metropolitan Washington. The region is currently designated as being in nonattainment of federal National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone. Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) are a precursor pollutant of ground-level ozone. In addition, NO<sub>x</sub> is a precursor to secondary particulate matter, such as particulate matter 2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). Exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub>, along with ground-level ozone, is associated with premature death, increased hospitalizations, and emergency room visits due to exacerbation of chronic heart and lung diseases and other serious health impacts. Some communities in metropolitan Washington face higher rates of illnesses such as asthma than the national average, and these illnesses are aggravated by these pollutants. As such, reductions in NO<sub>x</sub> emissions will provide health benefits from both reduced ozone and PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution.

While significant progress has been made in metropolitan Washington to reduce NO<sub>x</sub> emissions, addressing sources of NO<sub>x</sub>, including those from on-road vehicles, is critical to continuing to deliver cleaner air for the residents of the region. Over the last five ozone seasons, the region recorded an annual average of seven unhealthy air days, which are in part caused by emissions transported into the region, making this not only a regional issue but a national one. In the short term, strengthening the national GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks will likely have minimal impact on our region's ability to realize the reductions in NO<sub>x</sub> emissions needed to comply with the 2015 Ozone NAAQS. However, in the long term, strengthening these standards will reduce NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions as shown by EPA's forecasts in Table 44 and Table 45 of the Federal Register Notice.

Strengthening the GHG emissions standards will also provide considerable support for metropolitan Washington and communities across the United States to meet their GHG emissions reduction goals. Unfortunately, our region is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Observations in metropolitan Washington show that temperatures and the water surface level in the Potomac River are rising and will continue to rise. Extreme weather events and increases in the number of days with extreme heat or extreme cold will increase risks to health, energy usage patterns, plant and animal habitats, and infrastructure. These changes in our weather patterns are also affecting stormwater, drinking water, and wastewater. Broad-based climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, such as national rules, are necessary to reduce the impacts of climate change and fight the adverse effects of climate change on our region and planet.

In 2008, the *National Capital Region Climate Change Report* established regional climate goals to reduce GHG emissions by 20% below 2005 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2005 levels by 2050. In October 2020, the COG Board of Directors adopted new 2030 climate goals to supplement the previous goals, including a goal to reduce GHG emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030.

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Emissions from the transportation sector are one of the major contributors of GHGs in the region. As such, MWAQC, CEEPC, and the TPB believe that revising the GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light duty vehicles through model year 2026 to be more stringent than the SAFE Vehicles Rule is appropriate, feasible, and needed in order for the region to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goals. Additionally, the program's inclusion of flexibilities to incentivize the production and sale of vehicles with zero and near-zero emissions technology would support COG's policy priorities to meet the region's climate goals.

The metropolitan Washington region has implemented emissions reduction measures across all sectors, including on-road transportation, which contributes approximately 34% and 38% of the region's GHG and NOx emissions, respectively. The region relies heavily on federal control programs for a significant amount of additional GHG and NOx emissions reductions since these programs provide benefits across the marketplace. The federal government's leadership in delivering effective regulatory limits on GHG emissions from motor vehicles could also help reduce ozone and fine particle precursors and is a critical component of our ability to meet adopted environmental objectives and standards.

For these reasons, MWAQC, CEEPC, and the TPB support the EPA's proposal to strengthen national GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks through MY 2026.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed rule to revise existing National GHG Emissions Standards for Passenger Cars and Light Trucks through MY 2026.

Please contact Tim Masters, COG Environmental Planner, at 202 962 3245 or [tmasters@mwcog.org](mailto:tmasters@mwcog.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Day  
Chair, Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC)

Deni Taveras  
Chair, Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)

Charles Allen  
Chair, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)