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September 29, 2004

The Honorable Thomas Dernoga, Chairman
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290

Dear Chairman Dernoga:

As a standing member of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) since it was formed, Charles County wishes to express concern with the proposed changes to the Bylaws presented to MWAQC on September 22, 2004. While we agree with most of the changes, it was disconcerting to see language proposing the deletion of Southern Maryland's Tri-County Council (TCC).

We recognize and support appropriate updates to the MWAQC Bylaws which reflect current conditions and issues, and support a considered and thorough process of doing this for MWAQC. However, we are reminded that current Bylaw language regarding Charles County and Southern Maryland TCC was written after extensive negotiation and discussion with Maryland State officials and elected officials in Calvert and Charles Counties including the County Commissioners, State Senators and Delegates. Many will recall that current State Senator Thomas (Mac) Middleton was chairman of MWAQC when he was the President of the Charles County Board of Commissioners. Senator Middleton as well as the Charles County Commissioners and other officials from Southern Maryland have been actively involved with air quality and transportation conformity activities within MWAQC and the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) since the early 1990s. We believe that the current support role of the TCC to MWAQC and COG has proven extremely productive and effective and will continue to be an important and positive force in regional air quality and transportation planning issues. Therefore, Charles County strongly requests that the coordinative and supportive role that TCC has in MWAQC be continued and that the language currently in place in the Bylaws referencing TCC be retained.

On another proposed amendment, the added language to Section 10.3 which references "contributions, if any, from local governments represented on MWAQC but not members of COG" was also a surprise. The County will take this up with the State of Maryland Department of the Environment and will be prepared to comment at the next MWAQC meeting.

As a member of MWAQC and TPB, Charles County recognizes the challenges facing the region in our effort to move forward with transportation planning programs while protecting and improving air quality. The fact that air quality is compromised by the reality of increased pollution from vehicles, power plants and other aspects of urban life is well known, understood and accepted. As members of both MWAQC and the TPB, Charles County officials are well aware that transportation in this region is critical and sometimes can appear to overshadow air quality improvement measures and initiatives, however, along with the Southern Maryland Tri-County Council, this County's participation in and commitment to the region's air quality planning responsibilities remains strong. A process which provides the most transparency and seeks to include the broadest range of interests, talent and resources, seems to us to present the best chance we have at producing real and effective air quality improvements.

Very truly,



Wayne Cooper
Charles County Commissioner

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cc: Eugene T. Lauer, Charles County Administrator
Victoria L. Greenfield, Charles Deputy County Administrator
James Allman, Calvert County Administrator
Wm. Daniel Mayer, President Tri-County Council
David Jenkins, Tri-County Council
Marsha Kaiser, MDOT
Tad Aburn, MDE