

Copy of Comments Made by Tad Aburn<sup>1</sup>  
MWAQC Meeting  
September 25, 2024

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Mr. Chairman, MWAQC members, thank you for providing the opportunity to provide public comment today.

First, I would like to acknowledge the amazing effort made by the three Co-Chairs of the MWAQC EJ Subcommittee, the MWAQC leadership and the MWAQC staff for the intense process they have run over the past few months to make great progress on the MWAQC EJ Action Plan. In particular, the efforts made to work with EJ communities and the public in general have been extraordinary.

I would like to comment on one piece of the EJ Actions Priority List that the EJ Subcommittee is working on.

I would urge you to work with the small group of individuals that you have been working with who are representing different EJ communities to refine this list.

One specific comment is that the most important set of short term strategies is not clearly, at this time, on the EJ Actions Priority List.

That strategy is based upon the fact that almost all EJ areas suffer from three, somewhat unique-to-EJ-areas, problems.

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<sup>1</sup> My name is Tad Aburn. In October of 2022, I was the Chair of MWAQC TAC. For the past 15 years I was the MDE Air Director and an MWAQC member. I have helped write and have submitted over 30 SIPs to EPA over my career. I am now retired ... doing volunteer work for overburdened communities in Prince George's County and the District of Columbia.

- The first major issue in EJ areas is that the number of diesel vehicles being used and releasing emissions in EJ areas is huge. Probably more than 10 to 100 times the number of trucks and emissions in EJ areas compared to the areas where you and I live. Illegal diesel truck idling is rampant. State and Local Government needs to step in immediately, focus on EJ areas ... and better enforce the law.
- Like illegal idling, the release of toxic fugitive dust is also a huge problem in EJ areas and also illegal ... much worse than in almost all other areas in the region. Fugitive dust can contain asbestos, heavy metals and other toxic compounds. Excessive emissions of fugitive dust from businesses, roadways, construction sites and warehouse parking lots is illegal throughout the DMV. Again, State and Local Government need to focus on EJ areas and stop this illegal activity.
- Finally, EJ areas are also overwhelmed by many, many businesses who emit thousands of pollutants. These businesses include large facilities like power plants, metal recycling operations, aggregate plants and asphalt plants ... and small facilities like gas stations and paint spray booths. There are so many of these sources in EJ areas that State and Local Government agencies can not ensure that all of these sources are complying with the laws. This issue also needs to be given priority in EJ areas and fixed immediately.

Both MDE and DC DOEE have already started to do some of the enhanced inspection and enforcement efforts described above. It is resource intensive and most MWAQC members are already resource constrained. MDE has developed a set of enhanced enforcement tools that are much less resource intensive but still effective. MDE should brief MWAQC and MWAQC TAC on these “do-more-with less” tools.

It is my opinion, that if these three simple steps are taken, that the air pollution problems in EJ areas can be reduced by half. This is very, very significant.

I have attached three other documents for your consideration.

- Comments from last weeks EJ Subcommittee meeting
- A letter to CEEPC for their 9/25 meeting that has a direct linkage to MWAQCs clean air work
- A community built “Air Monitoring Primer” that is written from the perspective of individuals breathing the air in EJ communities

In closing, I would also urge you to clearly charge MWAQC TAC to take the technical information ... on how bad the air pollution hotspots are in EJ communities throughout the region ... more seriously. They have not yet begun to look at the data or the technical analyses on the air pollution and risks in EJ areas.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to provide public comment.

Copy of Comments Made by Tad Aburn<sup>1</sup>  
MWAQC Environmental Justice Subcommittee Meeting  
September 20, 2024

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Co-Chairs, MWAQC Environmental Justice Subcommittee members, thank you for providing the opportunity to provide public comment today.

My comments today focus primarily on one small piece of the proposed problem definition issue being discussed as agenda item #3 and the initial list of strategies that you will be discussing during agenda item # 4.

You will be asked to approve the proposed draft Problem Definition document. In general, the definition is good. One sentence is confusing and needs to be clarified. The last sentence in the first paragraph of the draft Problem Definition appears to place the full burden of addressing the public health risks on the community. This can not be correct. This needs to be revised to acknowledge that the actions to be taken to reduce emissions and address public health risks will come from government agencies, businesses **and** the community ... not **just the communities**.

Draft replacement language for your consideration is provided at the bottom of my written comments.

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The issues to be discussed in agenda item # 4 ... the Master List, the Screening Criteria and the short initial list of Priority Strategies ... will not be approved today, simply discussed.

Overall these documents represent a very good start and are reasonably good. I would suggest that you use the small group of individuals that are representing different communities to refine these documents. One specific comment is that the most important set of short term strategies is not clearly included.

That strategy is based upon the fact that almost all EJ areas suffer from three, somewhat unique-to-EJ-areas, problems.

- The first major issue in EJ areas is that the number of diesel vehicles being used and releasing emissions in EJ areas is huge. Probably more than 10 to 100 times the number of trucks and emissions in EJ areas compared to the areas where you and I live. Illegal diesel truck idling is rampant. State and Local Government needs to step in immediately, focus on EJ areas ... and better enforce the law.
- Like illegal idling, the release of toxic fugitive dust is also a huge problem in EJ areas and also illegal ... much worse than in almost all other areas in the region. Fugitive dust can contain asbestos, heavy metals and other toxic compounds. Excessive emissions of fugitive dust from businesses, roadways, construction sites and warehouse parking lots is illegal throughout the DMV. Again, State and Local Government need to focus on EJ areas and stop this illegal activity.
- Finally, EJ areas are also overwhelmed by many, many businesses who emit thousands of pollutants. These businesses include large facilities like power plants, metal recycling operations, aggregate plants and asphalt plants ... and small facilities like gas stations and paint spray booths. There are so many of these sources in EJ areas that State and Local Government agencies can not ensure that all of

these sources are complying with the laws. This issue also needs to be given priority in EJ areas and fixed immediately.

Both MDE and DC DOEE have already started to do some of the enhanced inspection and enforcement efforts discussed above. It is resource intensive and most MWAQC members are already resource constrained. MDE has developed a set of enhanced enforcement tools that are much less resource intensive but still effective. MDE should brief MWAQC and MWAQC members on these “do-more-with less” tools.

It is my opinion, that if these three simple steps are taken, that the air pollution problems in EJ areas can be reduced by half. This is very, very significant.

In closing, I would again like to thank the Co-Chairs for pushing hard over the past two months. The progress that is being made is very good. It is important to remember that communities of color ... the residents ... the children ... and the elderly ... are breathing air every day that is nowhere near as clean and healthy as the air that you and I breathe. Please continue to push for action.

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[Proposed Replacement Language ... Last Sentence in first paragraph.](#)

[Current Language](#)

There is a need for immediate and long-term government and partnership support and action to help build community awareness and help them better understand, document, and address these possible health risks.

[Replace With \(Changes Highlighted\)](#)

There is a need for immediate and long-term government and partnership **action and support** to help build community awareness and **to work with them as partners** to better understand, document, and **to take action to** address these possible health risks.

## MWAQC Environmental Justice Policy Primer

### *What is the Role of Traditional and New **Monitoring** in the MWAQC Environmental Justice (EJ) Action Plan?*

Background - During the EJ focused meeting of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) on May 22, 2024, MWAQC leadership asked for staff to work with stakeholders and to prepare several short, plain-english briefing papers on several topics including but not limited to air monitoring, existing efforts in some communities, the key components of an effective EJ Action Plan and a dynamic or living summary (updated for each MWAQC meeting) of public input. This is one of those briefing papers.

#### Why are communities building their own air monitoring networks?

- The current monitors run by the States and the District were never intended to focus on potentially inequitable exposure to air pollution in EJ communities.
- They were set up, using EPA guidance, as a mandatory requirement of the Clean Air Act (CAA) to cover the region as a whole - urban and rural exposures, exposures in areas with many roadways or business and areas without many roadways and business, etc. There are approximately 20 monitors in the region.
- The CAA monitors are expensive (\$100K to \$300K) so there are only a limited number of these monitors (about 1 per County) spread throughout the region.
- Because of this, communities, EPA, the states and municipal and County government have begun to build community-based monitoring networks, using emerging, low-cost air monitoring “sensors” (simple air monitors) to address inequitable air pollution exposures in EJ and other overburdened communities.

#### How do community-based air monitoring networks work?

- There are already community-based air monitoring networks in place in the region. The network in the Cheverly area of PG County in Maryland is a very good example and could be used as a model. Cheverly has volunteered to help.
- The networks use low-cost air monitoring sensors (\$200 to \$5000 - mostly @ \$200) to set up approximately 20 to 30 monitoring sites throughout a community.
- EPA and the states have tested the sensors and established “correction factors” that allow the sensor data to be comparable to the data from the CAA monitors. Actual side-by-side CAA monitor/sensor testing takes place.
- In general, the sensor data is reasonably good for doing things like determining the relative “excess exposure” in EJ communities and for tracking progress.
- The sensor data is not good enough for determining CAA SIP compliance.

- The monitors/sensors cover a mix of traditional air pollutants like ozone and fine particulate, but also cover air toxics like black carbon and heavy metals.
- The sensors are placed at residences, on public property and at other sites.
- One of the major issues in EJ communities is “cumulative exposure” to many different air pollutants at the same time ... emitted by many different sources in the community. One of the common links between all EJ areas is that they are overburdened by many air pollution sources ... mobile and stationary. The community-based networks begin to look at this difficult issue.

#### What resources are available to support community-based air monitoring?

- EPA is providing very large amounts of grant funding to support community based monitoring programs. It’s there for the asking.
- Local academic institutions like Trinity, University of Maryland (UM), Howard, GW and others have expressed interest in helping to work with communities to set up and test the monitors and to help with data analysis.
- UM performs all of these tasks in the Cheverly partnership.
- Recently, charitable foundations have also begun to offer support for community-based air monitoring and partnerships.

#### The “Trust” factor

- One of the very real challenges associated with community-based partnerships is trust. In general, many EJ communities feel that they have been overlooked for many years and ... in general ... do not trust the government.
- The community-based air monitoring has proven to be a very good vehicle to begin to repair these relationships that have eroded over the past few decades.

#### How does community-based monitoring fit into the MWAQC EJ Action Plan?

- Community-based monitoring networks should be set up in as many EJ communities as possible. State and local members of MWAQC, MWCOG itself and local academic institutions can use federal funding and all help in this effort.
- These networks help to identify new strategies, to track progress associated with the implementation of emission reduction programs using existing regulations and programs and to build trust between governments and EJ communities.
- MDE and UM have helped build and implement the community-based network in the Cheverly area. The effort is fully funded with new federal funding.
- MWCOG could provide an invaluable service to its members by establishing a community-based monitoring support center to help secure federal funding and to help State, Municipal and County governments work with EJ communities and local academic institutions to build and implement the community-based air monitoring networks.



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September 23, 2024

Jolene Ivey, Chair, Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)  
Takis Karantonis, Immediate Past-Chair, CEEPC  
CEEPC Committee Members  
777 North Capitol St. N.E.  
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Washington, DC 20002

Re: The Climate Change Crisis - Need for CEEPC to Act on 9/25

Chair Ivey, Past-Chair Karantonis and CEEPC members:

I am writing to urge you to immediately forward strong advice to both the MWCOG Board and the TPB on the need for a significant increase in the level of effort at MWCOG and TPB to address the climate crisis and to immediately update the region's old and now inadequate climate change goals.

MWCOG staff has explained to me that CEEPC is not really an MWCOG policy committee as only the Board, MWAQC and TPB have policy making authority. CEEPC is however expected to provide critical policy advice to the three policy making bodies. There has never been a more important issue for CEEPC to provide advice on than the climate crisis issues spelled out very well in the May 20, 2024 ACPAC recommendation to CEEPC.

MWCOG staff has also explained to me that CEEPC does not routinely allow for public comment, like MWAQC and TPB do, as again, CEEPC is not a committee with policy making authority. The CEEPC Chair however can allow public comment. If you would have allowed public comment on the climate crisis issue during your September 25, 2024 meeting, and advertised that opportunity, I believe you would have received thousands of comments pushing CEEPC to act and to act quickly.

I find it discouraging that your agenda does not include an action to forward any kind of recommendation or advice to the MWCOG policy bodies after having had the ACPAC recommendations for over 4 months. The agenda only includes a short 15 minute item to, once again, discuss the ACPAC recommendation. CEEPC does not meet again until the end of November.

At your last meeting you had a very, very scary briefing from Sunny Wescott, the Chief Meteorologist at the Department of Homeland Security on the potentially devastating climate change impacts in the MWCOG region. This presentation was from a national expert, very scary and highlighted the “urgency” issue in the ACPAC recommendation. Chair Ivey commented on how scary and alarming this presentation was.

I urge you to amend your agenda for Wednesday at the beginning of the meeting. Most of the meeting, if not the full meeting, should be dedicated to defining a process that will get a formal recommendation from CEEPC to the MWCOG Board and TPB as quickly as possible. The Chair has the authority to do this. You can also set up a process to have special sessions with CEEPC to finalize the CEEPC recommendations over the next few weeks. See my July 24, 2024 email that is appended below.

It is critical for CEEPC to provide advice to both the COG Board and to TPB. The need for CEEPC to provide advice to TPB is urgent. TPB is updating the region's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction plan for the transportation sector right now. They are using the older, now outdated and inadequate MWCOG climate change goals to guide their work. The MWCOG TPB GHG emission reduction effort is mediocre at best. This is unusual as TPB is recognized nationally as a progressive, innovative transportation planning group.

Because the TPB GHG plan is based upon weak goals, difficult but critical emission reduction approaches are not being included. The TPB plan is appropriately heavy on electrification and other technology based emission reduction approaches but noticeably weak on strategies to address reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), other Travel Demand Management (TDM) concepts and transportation driven sequestration initiatives.

The goals recommended by ACPAC (something similar to the Montgomery County goals of 100% reduction by 2025 with an 80% reduction by 2027) would clearly drive consideration of more VMT and TDM strategies and increased attention to sequestration as part of the TPB GHG emission reduction plan. The State of Maryland has similar, if not tougher, goals to those in Montgomery County. Why is CEEPC not asking its own members to brief the committee on why they have established climate

change goals that are much, much more aggressive than the goals currently adopted regionally by MWCOG?

MWAQC also received a recommendation from ACPAC on May 20th. They plan to finalize a response to that recommendation during their meeting just after the CEEPC meeting on the 25th. A group of strong leaders at MWAQC has, over the past 2 months, pushed very hard for action on a similarly critical issue ... environmental justice. Because of the efforts of the MWAQC leadership and the three Co-Chairs of the MWAQC Environmental Justice Subcommittee the MWAQC process to adopt a strong, action oriented EJ Action Plan, that builds from very significant public input, is moving forward at a remarkable pace to allow MWAQC to adopt this plan within the next six months. The leadership at MWAQC should be commended.

I do acknowledge that you already have arranged for several very interesting briefings on the 25th, but there is nothing on the agenda that is anywhere near as important as the need for CEEPC to forward a strong, science-based recommendation on the climate crisis to the three MWCOG policy committees. I'm certain the proposed speakers would defer their presentations to a future CEEPC meeting to allow for this critical policy discussion.

In closing, I have great respect for the commitment to climate change that almost all of the CEEPC members have demonstrated. I again urge you to adjust your agenda for next Wednesday to set up a process with a hard deadline of getting CEEPC recommendations or guidance to both the MWCOG Board and to the TPB within the next several weeks.

Thank you again for allowing public input. I would be happy to discuss these comments at your convenience.

*George S. Aburn Jr*

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cc :

Charles Allen, Chair, MWCOG BOD  
Christina Henderson, Chair, MWCOG TPB  
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Anita Bonds, Vice-Chair, MWAQC  
Tom Dernoga, Vice Chair, MWAQC  
David Snyder, Vice Chair, MWAQC  
Julie Kimmel, Chair ACPAC  
William Washburn, Vice-Chair ACPAC  
ACPAC Recommendation Sub-Committee  
Chris Hoagland, MDE

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## July 24, 2024 Email Comments

### Additional CEEPC Meetings Before Late September

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Wed, Jul 24,  
11:52 AM



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Chairwoman Ivey - Thank you for your efforts today to push the ACPAC recommendations.

Your comment on how scary the presentation from Sunny Wescott was ... was very accurate. The two presentations that followed Sunny's presentation were equally scary.

I know you see the disconnect between her very alarming presentation and the potential 6 month (or longer) delay in addressing the call for urgent action from ACPAC. The ACPAC call for urgent action and stronger goals is specifically designed to try and avoid some of the most horrific potential consequences of climate change. Again, the ACPAC recommendation was unanimously supported and submitted to CEEPC before your May 2024 meeting.

I urge you to follow the lead of MWAQC Chair Boddye who has set up a process where a group of MWAQC members are meeting three times between May and late September (both CEEPC and MWAQC meet next in late September) to address an urgent issue that is on the MWAQC priority list ... environmental justice. As CEEPC Chair you do have this authority.

You may also want to allow some of the ACPAC experts that helped write the ACPAC recommendations and stakeholder experts to participate in the interim meetings designed to support a strong final recommendation from CEEPC at your September meeting.

If there is anything that I can do to help ... just ask.

The climate crisis is very real and as ACPAC Chair Kimmel said during her update at today's meeting ... Every single day of delay matters.

Tad

Tad Aburn

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Volunteer for multiple communities in MD and DC

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