

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON  COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

*One Region Moving Forward*

January 8, 2014

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Honorable Patrick Wojahn, Chair  
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Chair Wojahn:

Thank you for providing an opportunity to the Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to comment on the draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP).

CEEPC was established by the MWCOG Board in April 2009 to serve as its principal policy adviser on climate change, energy and other environmental issues. The committee is responsible for managing implementation of the region's Climate Report, adopted by the MWCOG Board in 2008. The Climate Report includes a series of recommendations to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation and land use, including increasing fuel and travel efficiency, reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improving land use patterns, and developing a regional planning process that includes stated goals for GHG reductions from the transportation sector. The report sets regional goals for reducing GHG emissions, including goals to return to 2005 levels by 2012, to reduce emissions by 20 percent by 2020 and to reduce emissions 80 percent by 2050, compared to 2005 levels. The 2020 and 2050 targets were also adopted in Region Forward.

CEEPC commends the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) for its multi-year effort to develop the RTPP and proactively engage stakeholders. We are pleased the effort included a focus on enhancing environmental quality and protecting natural and cultural resources. Overall, the plan demonstrates a thoughtful assessment of challenges facing the region's transportation sector going forward, and careful identification of strategies and priorities for solving these challenges. We hope TPB will move to adopt the plan and will begin taking steps to implement the plan in early 2014.

In light of the adopted regional GHG goals and TPB's 2013 Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) Performance Analysis, which shows that transportation sector GHG emissions are above 2005 levels, CEEPC recommends that the RTPP commit to establishing quantitative goals for reducing transportation sector GHG emissions for appropriate future years, taking into consideration the regional goals adopted by MWCOG.

CEEPC would like to work with TPB to examine emissions from the transportation sector and to identify cost-effective strategies and opportunities to reduce emissions to help meet the regional goals. The committee encourages the transportation sector to take a holistic view of its impact on regional emissions, including all other transportation related activities such as rail operations, commercial aviation, and construction.

CEEPC recommends that the RTPP acknowledge the importance of maintaining and increasing tree canopy and incorporating the concept of "Green Streets," which can serve to enhance communities, improve air quality, reduce water pollution and store carbon.

*\*Adjunct Member*

The sector can also begin to further examine the integration of renewable energy technologies and continue to support new clean alternative fueling infrastructure. Such additional focus will contribute to achieving the environmental goals outlined by Region Forward.

One area of strong CEEPC support is the plan's emphasis on transit-oriented development and the long-term strategies to accommodate future growth and enhance circulation within Regional Activity Centers. These efforts will help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce per capita VMT, resulting in improved air quality and lower GHG emissions, which are both objectives of the Region Forward vision.

CEEPC also agrees with the fundamental need to continue funding for the metro system to improve access, maintenance and reliability. A robust public transit system will be critical to reducing GHG emissions while accommodating regional population growth.

CEEPC supports the plan's multimodal approach, including strategies to promote electric vehicles and commute alternatives, to expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, to develop new cost-effective transit systems, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), to connect activity centers, and to introduce express toll lanes in the region. Initiatives promoting a variety of transportation options will further contribute to reducing automobile dependency and cutting GHG emissions in the region. CEEPC recommends that the RTPP promote alternative fueled vehicles, such as compressed natural gas buses and trash trucks, in addition to hybrids and electric vehicles, as CNG vehicles can further reduce both GHG and particulate emissions.

CEEPC hopes that implementation of the RTPP process will lead to a more concerted and inclusive effort to address GHG emissions from the transportation sector and will encourage development of additional strategies and measures to reduce onroad mobile GHG emissions.

CEEPC acknowledges that achieving the goals outlined in the plan will be a long term process involving many stakeholders. CEEPC would like to be a partner in this regional conversation and in the efforts to make the plan a success. In order to realize the RTPP goals, it will be critical to establish a framework to assist state and local governments in developing projects that advance the plan's priorities, as well as to foster the necessary investments for regional and local projects. CEEPC would like to offer its assistance in bringing stakeholders to the table and encouraging local leaders to take action on the region's priorities, such as providing support for funding of the Metro 2025 plan.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. We look forward to working together to advance our common goals for a more sustainable future for our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Berliner', written in a cursive style.

Roger Berliner  
Chair, Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments