

**Draft Meeting Summary**  
**COG Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)**  
**September 25, 2013**

**Members and Alternates Present**

Hon. Roger Berliner, Montgomery County, Chair  
Hon. Al Carr, Jr., Maryland House of Delegates  
Hon. Jay Fiset, Arlington County  
Hon. Del Pepper, City of Alexandria  
Dr. Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County  
Hon. Johannah Barry, Falls Church  
Ray Bourland, Pepco Holdings  
Laine Cidlowski, District of Columbia  
Bucky Green, US Environmental Protection Agency  
Hon. Penelope Gross, Fairfax County  
Rachel Healy, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Hon. Konrad Herling, Greenbelt  
Caroline Petti, COG Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee  
Jeff Platenberg, Fairfax County Public Schools  
Brendan Shane, District Department of the Environment (DDOE)  
Nicole Steele, Alliance to Save Energy  
Steve Walz, NVRC  
Hon. Jonathan Way, City of Manassas

**Others Present:**

Russell Carroll, Prince George's County  
Kara Davis, Sustainability Consultant  
John Heermans, DDOE  
Mike Lake, Fairfax County Department of Transportation  
Nicole Rentz, Staff for Mary Cheh, DC Council  
Adam Ortiz, Prince George's County  
Khoa Tran, City of Alexandria

**Staff Present:**

Leah Boggs, COG DEP  
Amanda Campbell, COG DEP  
Maia Davis, COG DEP  
Stuart Freudberg, Senior Director, Environment, Public Safety, and Health, COG  
Jeff King, COG DEP  
Joan Rohlfs, Director, Environmental Resources, COG DEP  
Isabel Ricker, COG DEP  
Ron Kirby, COG DTP  
Daniel Sonenklar, COG DTP  
Elena Constantine, COG DTP  
Michael Farrell, COG DTP

## **1. Call to Order/Introductions/Chair Remarks**

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Chair Berliner called the meeting to order at 10:04 am. The agenda was approved with no changes. Chair Berliner reminded the committee that in July, CEEPC met jointly with the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee. COG staff is identifying ways in which the committees can support each other on shared issues.

## **2. 2012 Progress Report, Climate & Energy Action Plan 2012**

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Ms. Davis reviewed COG's greenhouse gas reduction goals, the first of which is to reduce emissions 10% below business as usual levels by 2012. Between 2005 and 2012, greenhouse gas emissions from electricity consumption dropped from 40 million metric tons to 33 million metric tons. The region has more than 800 energy star buildings and 700 LEED certified buildings or developments. 95% of local jurisdictions are tracking government building energy performance. The region has 2,897 power grid-connected renewable energy systems operating, and 73% of jurisdictions have a renewable energy system on government property. Although there were only 500 electric vehicles registered in the region in 2012, an additional 15 to 30,000 are expected to be operating in the region by 2015.

In the coming year, COG plans to continue to gather utility data and share it with local governments and others, conduct an annual regional greenhouse gas inventory, and conduct an annual transportation sector greenhouse gas inventory. COG also plans to hold a benchmarking workshop and set up a Portfolio Manager Regional Master Sharing Account. COG will coordinate a second round of regional solar cooperative procurement, and implement the Rooftop Solar Challenge. COG will continue to host the Electric Vehicle Workgroup to move forward on recommended strategies such as regional electric vehicle cooperative procurement for government fleets. COG has focused on building capacity to address climate impacts, and plans to produce a fact sheet summarizing recent findings. Another priority in the 2013 - 2016 Climate & Energy Action Plan is facilitating green cooperative purchasing.

### **DISCUSSION:**

- Several attendees agreed that the region has made significant accomplishments in the realm of energy and climate, but that there is more work to be done.
- Chair Berliner and Mr. Bourland pointed out that due to market forces, coal is being replaced by natural gas which is less expensive and better for the environment.
- Ms. Rohlfs and Mr. Walz clarified that COG is working with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission to develop a consistent greenhouse gas inventory methodology across Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland based on the latest ICLEI protocol.
- Mr. Agazi said that Fairfax County was not able to utilize Portfolio Manager since it lacked adequate data for fire stations. Mr. Agazi noted that there has been progress on building codes in Maryland, but perhaps not as much progress in Virginia. He suggested developing a mechanism to reward building energy efficiency such as a 'LEED Energy Plus' labeling concept that draws energy requirements from LEED and Energy Star.

- Mr. Herling suggested using tax credits to incentivize businesses' green practices and to attract incubators for environmentally oriented firms. Chair Berliner said that he sponsored legislation to incentivize green tech firms.
- Mr. Fisetto asked about follow-up to the building code issuance to ensure that states adopt the International Green Construction Code. Ms. Rohlfs said that the Built Environment and Energy Advisory Committee is closely following the issue. Mr. Walz added that a key rallying point in Virginia is affordability for low-income residents and workers, which NVRC, Arlington, and Fairfax are supporting. Ms. Steele said she can share contacts to assist with that effort.
- In response to Ms. Gross's question about promoting the positive work in the report, Mr. Freudberg shared that Chair Berliner will give a presentation on CEEPC activities, including green purchasing, to the COG Board October. Chair Berliner said that cooperative purchasing initiatives will explore how to strengthen regional cooperation and drive down costs.
- All members present agreed to send a letter to the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) to request that TPB develop and share a transportation sector annual emissions inventory to support CEEPC's Climate & Energy Action Plan.

### **3. Proposed: Climate Leadership Awards Pilot**

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Caroline Petti, Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) Chair, asked for CEEPC's support to launch a Climate Leadership Awards Pilot program. The proposal aims to recognize achievements and incentivize energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives in the COG region. A Task Force made up of several ACPAC and CEEPC members will define the details of the program. After implementation, the pilot would be evaluated for possible continuance. See the proposal handout for more information.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Chair Berliner said that the awards concept is a way to create positive reinforcement in the absence of mandatory regulations. The Task Force should choose the specific topics. He asked the committee to approve the proposal.
- Ms. Gross asked about funding, and Ms. Rohlfs explained that CEEPC's environmental resources budget could support the effort.
- Mr. Fisetto, Ms. Gross, and Mr. Agazi suggested having a separate award for that would acknowledge work of non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Chair Berliner asked COG staff to reflect on these comments and moved that the committee approve the awards pilot program as proposed. The motion passed.

### **4. Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**

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Mr. Kirby stated that COG Transportation staff have the tools to produce greenhouse gas inventories and sharing that data with local jurisdictions will create economies of scale, although to date they have focused on future projections rather than past trends. Vehicle miles traveled has not been growing as fast as population is growing. Vehicles are required to be

more fuel efficient and fuel standards are improving which will result in a dramatic reduction in fleet emissions in future years as fleets turn over.

Mr. Kirby explained that the Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) Regional Transportation Priorities Plan identifies near-term, ongoing, and long-term regional strategies that the public can support and that offer the greatest potential for addressing regional challenges. The Plan identifies challenges and proposes strategies that go beyond the impact analysis (accessibility, greenhouse gases, congestion, air quality, etc.) required for the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP). In contrast to the CLRP, the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan identifies overall goals and strategies rather than specific projects. Strategies are classified by near-term, ongoing, and long-term timeframes.

Congestion, which is one of the priorities identified, leads to more air emissions. Some of the solutions include COG's Commuter Connections program and promoting electric vehicles. In the inner jurisdictions, only 45% of commuters drive to work, while 70 to 80% of commuters drive to work in the suburbs. There is an opportunity to better coordinate land use and transportation to reduce emissions in some areas.

Some of the goals discussed included providing a comprehensive range of transportation options for everyone; promoting a strong regional economy including a healthy regional core and dynamic activity centers; ensuring adequate system maintenance, preservation, and safety; maximizing the operational effectiveness and safety of the transportation system; enhancing environmental quality, and protect natural and cultural resources; and supporting inter-regional and international travel and commerce.

A Public Opinion Survey was conducted that reached a representative sample of COG region residents. Although all of the measures in the Plan were rated as important to fund, the following are priorities that arose from the Public Opinion Survey:

1. Address metro and highway repair challenges
2. Address transit crowding and roadway congestion challenges
3. Address special focus areas such as mobility needs of people with disabilities, bus priority, enforcing traffic laws to increase safety, alternative fuel vehicles, expanding bicycle infrastructure

Next, staff will review public comments and modify as necessary. Another comment period will likely occur in October. The Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is designed to inform projects included the next Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan. The Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is available online [here](#), and the survey format (which describes the plan in a quick and visually appealing format) is [here](#).

- Chair Berliner shared that Montgomery County is looking into Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options and held hearings on it this week. Montgomery County is committed to BRT but it will be a tough sell on roadways through existing neighborhoods. Those who are opposed to BRT claim that the proponents are pawns of developers, even though the goals are to

address environment, economy, and quality of life issues. In some cases, limited space means that a current travel lane would need to be taken to dedicate to BRT, which causes pushback. COG can be a leader and help broaden the conversation to assist in articulating the benefits of BRT regionally. COG can help make the case for regional transportation solutions that integrate metro, BRT and other pieces of the system to maximize person throughput.

- Mr. Fisetto said that in Virginia, although using existing roadways for BRT is a challenge, some think that adding new roads beyond activity centers is yielding to developers since it uses limited public funds. Enhancing existing infrastructure to create better access such as bus shelters and sidewalks is better than creating large new roads that lead to more problems.
- Mr. Herling said that Maryland is urging expansion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway which would not result in a change in transportation modes. However, if a bus moved faster with stoplight priority, that might change commuters' mindset.
- Mr. Berliner said that buses should attract riders of choice with amenities such as wifi and coffee. Ms. Gross said that in Fairfax, Pentagon workers rely on the bus—not just the poor. Mr. Kirby said that evidence shows that people of all incomes will use bus service if it is a good alternative.
- Mr. Kirby said that a BRT project in Alexandria and Arlington on Route 1 will open next year which will provide an opportunity to see how it works.
- Ms. Pepper said that the plan is terrific and touches on the issues that Alexandria grapples with. Bus shelters are important.

## **5. Complete Streets/Green Streets Policy**

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Mr. Ortiz described how green streets can be a way to connect and beautify the community, and how Edmonston approached the implementation of green streets as if it were a community park. Mr. Ortiz then explained how one street in Edmonston was retrofitted to exemplify a complete and green street. The road was subject to flooding due to an abundance of impervious surfaces and is located in the Anacostia River watershed. The street was retrofitted with native trees, efficient streetlights, ADA compliant sidewalks, stormwater management facilities, and a bike lane. Similar projects are underway at Decatur Street and Ager Road. These retrofits treat roads less as a thoroughfare for vehicles and more like a park for people. Rain gardens, swales and other stormwater practices are installed in bump outs, medians and grass buffers along the road.

Prince George's County passed a formal green/complete streets policy which stated that new and retrofitted roads should employ these elements to the fullest extent practicable. The county's Department of Environmental Resources is implementing low impact development stormwater management to treat 46,000 acres of impervious surfaces in coming years.

Russell Carroll, Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation explained that Maryland requires all new development to utilize environmental site design to capture a calculated volume of runoff for that site. Now the county is encouraging more environmental site design within urban rights of way. The county is developing guidance for urban roadways that have spatial constraints due to their location. It is easier to employ environmental site design along rural roads. Some citizens prefer only trees and grass along the sidewalk; more outreach is needed to explain the value of the new techniques. It is more art than science to integrate green and complete streets in any particular community.

Mr. Farrell said that in 2012, the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership sent a letter to the Transportation Planning Board and the COG Board requesting that a regional policy on Green Streets be developed and approved. The Transportation Planning Board suggested that COG hold a workshop to better understand green streets implementation. The workshop was held in April, 2013. Staff developed a draft policy inventory, draft regional policy and template. Comments will be accepted until November 20 (the TPB may hear the regional green streets proposal at the December TPB meeting).

Mr. Farrell clarified that Green Streets does not have the same consensus on definition and purpose as Complete Streets, so staff drew on Prince George's County, Portland, and others' policies. The policy statement endorses green streets and encourages members to adopt their own policies, as reflected in the attached example template policy. The template could be modified as desired to be more or less stringent.

Chair Berliner commended Prince George's County for developing a complete/green streets approach. He inquired as to whether green streets is stormwater focused. Mr. Farrell responded that green streets employs landscaping and other environmental design components to capture and filter runoff, but it has other benefits.

Mr. Shane added that this topic is related to jobs and economic growth. The District of Columbia is focusing on growing green infrastructure jobs. Prince George's County's immense investment in green infrastructure that creates local jobs is driving the development of training programs.

## **6. Projects and Subcommittee Updates**

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### *Solar Projects Update*

- Mr. King said that the solar collaborative began with 14 agencies bundling their demand for solar projects. Now the initiative is focusing on those agencies most ready to advance which includes the District of Columbia, Montgomery County, WMATA, and Greenbelt. Round 2 is now forming if anyone is interested in joining.
- COG is partnering with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council and the National Association of Regional Councils and Optony to participate in a US Department of Energy grant program called the Rooftop Solar Challenge, whose purpose is to reduce the non-system costs of solar power such as permitting. COG jurisdictions that join will post their

progress towards goals on a solar roadmap website. The hope is that all COG jurisdictions will join.

### *Cooperative Green Purchasing*

- Ms. Davis said that COG is working on a green cooperative purchasing initiative. Chair Berliner is slated to present the initiative at the Chief Accounting Officers meeting. A webinar on green purchasing is planned for October or November.

### *Building Code Conference*

- Ms. Boggs said that COG received funding from the Energy Foundation to send 30-member cohort to provide comments on building codes at the International Green Construction Code conference in New Jersey next week.

## **7. Adjournment**

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The meeting was adjourned at Noon. The next meeting will be held November 20<sup>th</sup>.