

Copy of Comments Made by Tad Aburn¹
MWAQC ACPAC Meeting
July 15, 2024

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Chair Kimmel, Vice Chair Washburn, ACPAC Committee members, thank you for providing the opportunity to provide public comment today.

My comments today are very simple. They cover two topics:

1. The very general and very nice ... but totally inappropriate for MWAQC and the DC region ... briefing on the draft EJ Action Plan Public Engagement Plan that you will see today and how it needs to be modified to be effective and allow MWAQC to actually adopt and implement the aggressive, action oriented EJ Action Plan that **MWAQC has committed to do within a year, and**
2. My serious concerns over why ... it's now been almost two months ... the MWCOCG policy committees appear to have ignored and not even begun to discuss the two "urgent" ACPAC recommendations submitted to MWAQC and CEEPC before their May 22, 2024 back-to-back meetings.

Consistent with the process used at the last EJ Subcommittee meeting, the Chair and the Vice Chair can allow the public to actually participate in the discussion today that will hopefully take place between the members. I respectfully ask the Chair and Vice Chair to allow full public participation

¹ 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.

(when they raise their hand and are called upon by the Chair) during the question and answer and discussion session during the 7/15/24 meeting.

The Public Engagement Plan Needs to be Revised

The draft public engagement plan is a very nice, very general plan that could be used for almost any area in the Country. It does not recognize the vast amount of experience and expertise that already exist in the DC region. At the May 22nd MWAQC Meeting over 50 stakeholders provided very specific, meaningful comments. ACPAC should require COG staff to provide a detailed summary of these comments. A high level summary of these comments is included in Attachment 1. The comments came from scientists (on the science, urgency and risk), communities (on fast emission reduction action), other EJ experts and individuals. The public engagement plan needs to be revised to embrace the extensive existing efforts that have already been made. The public engagement plan also needs to be revised to be consistent with MWAQCs goals and to not create public expectations that can not be fulfilled. See attachments for more detail.

ACPAC Should Express Concern to the MWCOG Policy Committees Over the Lack of Action on the Two ACPAC Recommendations Submitted to MWAQC and CEEPC for their 5/22/24 meetings

This is a very simple comment. Why have the ACPAC comments ... which focused primarily on the need to treat climate change and EJ as “**urgent**” problems basically been ignored for two months?

ACPAC should communicate how they feel about the lack of attention being paid to the recommendations.

I have attached several recent communications that provide more detail on my two basic comments.

My recent comments made to the MWAQC EJ Subcommittee on public participation and the draft public engagement plan are included as Attachment 1 to these comments.

My July 10 EMAIL to ACPAC registering for public comment today and expressing major concerns is also included as Attachment 2.

My recent EMAIL to MWAQC on why the public engagement plan is not consistent with the MWAQC charge and why MWCOG may be concerned over the plan and how it may create public expectations that are inconsistent with current MWCOG goals is included as Attachment 3.

A short summary of several very specific comments and concerns on your briefing on the community engagement plan for agenda item #2 are included as Attachment 4.

Thank you again for allowing public comment and participation.

***** ATTACHMENT 1 *****

Comments on Public Participation and the Draft Public Engagement Plan
for the MWAQC EJ Action Plan Submitted to the MWAQC EJ
Subcommittee on July 10, 2024

Copy of Comments Made by Tad Aburn²
MWAQC EJ Subcommittee Meeting
July 10, 2024

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Chairwoman Mink, Chairwoman Bonds, Chairman Snyder, EJ
Subcommittee members, thank you for providing the opportunity to
provide public comment today.

My comments today follow up on the numerous environmental justice or
EJ comments from the public that were made during the May 22, 2024
MWAQC EJ meeting. There were over 50 comments made or
submitted that provided many specific recommendations to MWAQC
and the EJ Subcommittee on the critical elements of an EJ Action Plan.

Unfortunately there is no briefing on these critical comments on your
agenda today. Over 100 pages of written comments were submitted.

² 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.

Your briefing binder does not include any of these written comments. The comments came from EJ communities like Ivy City, Cheverly and Bladensburg, academic institutions like the University of Maryland, George Washington University and Trinity, EJ advocacy groups like EMPOWER DC, Sierra Club, CCAN and the DC EJ Coalition and from national EJ experts like Dr. Sacoby Wilson and Dr. Russell Dickerson.

The EJ Subcommittee should charge the COG staff to provide a detailed briefing on these comments at the next meeting.

My name is Tad Aburn and I was an MWAQC member and the Director of Maryland's air pollution program for over 15 years. I am working with approximately 30 different community groups, academic experts, advocates and individuals who are extremely interested in making sure that the MWAQC EJ Action Plan is comprehensive and effective and implemented in an urgent fashion. Many of my colleagues commented at the MWAQC EJ meeting on May 22nd. Some of the key points from these comments include:

- From the researchers ... The problem is real, very serious and needs to be addressed quickly.
- From all commenters ... Include significant public participation ... Many offers to support were made. Don't reinvent the wheel ... Build from the wealth of knowledge and experience that local stakeholders have.
- From the EJ communities ... The Plan must be very action oriented and include real, immediate emission reductions, deadlines and meaningful progress benchmarks focused on reducing emissions

and health risk in EJ communities. A fluffy, feel-good guide or toolkit is unacceptable.

- From communities and advocates ... Existing control measures in the MWAQC and State SIPs ... for problems like diesel exhaust, toxic fugitive dust and poorly controlled stationary sources ... should be implemented more aggressively in overburdened, EJ communities by MWAQC and MWAQC members immediately. This kind of enhanced implementation or enforcement effort ... as demonstrated in the MDE EJ partnership in PG County ... and now the actual data from the community monitoring network ... can significantly reduce public health risk immediately.
- From communities and researchers ... MWAQC should establish a community-based air monitoring support center to find readily available funding and other implementation resources to establish hyper-local air monitoring networks in EJ communities. Federal funding is readily available to support this effort. Local universities are interested in helping make this happen.

Additional information on what stakeholders believe needs to be included in the MWAQC EJ Action Plan is included in the attached 5/15/24 letter to MWAQC and MWCOG. It should be in your packet, but unfortunately, it is not.

Almost all of the individuals and organizations who commented during the May 22nd MWAQC EJ Meeting offered to help by providing information or briefings. EJ Chair Snyder, MWAQC Chair Boddye and MWAQC Vice Chair Dernoga all stressed how impressed they were by the comments and how important it will be to work with stakeholders. Unfortunately there has been no attempt by COG staff over the past 2

months to contact any of the individuals or organizations who provided comment.

I again offer my help and would be happy to help COG staff put together briefings for MWAQC and the EJ Subcommittee to make sure that the significant amount of experience and expertise that is available from local stakeholders is presented to the policy makers at MWAQC. The briefing you will receive later appears to want to start from scratch - in essence - to reinvent the wheel. Please, build from the vast experience and expertise you have in the region.

In closing, the air pollution in EJ communities is now well documented to be very, very unhealthy. Researchers have called the air pollution levels in Cheverly and Ivy City "Alarming". Real people, often children, often people of color, are breathing this toxic air every day. MWAQC and MWCOG plans and policies have unintentionally created these air pollution hotspots in EJ areas. I urge you to charge the COG staff to speed up the process. It's been over two years since MWAQC voted unanimously to EXPEDITIOUSLY adopt a strong regional EJ action Plan. Nothing has happened over those two years.

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

***** ATTACHMENT 2 *****

Copy of EMAIL to ACPAC from Tad Aburn on July 10, 2024 Registering
for Public Comment and Expressing Major Concerns

Public Comment at July 15 ACPAC Meeting



Jul 10, 2024, 4:25 PM



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to Jeffrey,
Leah,
MWAQCPublic
, Dshprentz,
HERBERT,
Jolene,
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bcc: me

Please register me to provide public comment during the July 15th ACPAC meeting.

What have MWAQC and CEEPC done on the two ACPAC recommendations that were delivered to both Committees before their last meeting on 5/22/24. Assume that because they both were unanimously supported by ACPAC ... and pushed the concept of urgency as it relates to the now well recognized climate crisis ... and the need for immediate attention and much more urgent action ... that those recommendations have been treated as very high priorities. What's the action plan?

Were individuals and organizations who commented during the May 22nd MWAQC meeting notified directly on this ACPAC comment opportunity? The EJ Subcommittee supported better notification to the public. I believe they agree that a notice, buried in an attachment on a web page that no one knows exists is ton. both ineffective and unprofessional.

The two minute limit for the 7/15 comments also implies that public input is unimportant and not really wanted by COG staff. The COG staff decisions to immediately mute and disable chat and raise hand functions also seems unprofessional and definitely discourages meaningful public participation.

Is public participation a real goal for MWAQC ... I sense the elected officials think it is ... or is it just something that is an annoying inconvenience to staff, but needs to be done for optics.

***** ATTACHMENT 3 *****

Copy of EMAIL to MWAQC from Tad Aburn on July 10, 2024
Expressing Major Concerns Over Whether the Public Engagement Plan
is Consistent with what MWAQC Asked For


MWCOG Leadership Should Discuss the Engagement Plan



Wed, Jul 10, 2:29 PM



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to
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Kenny, Jeffrey,
Wesley, bcc:
me 

The briefing on the engagement plan was good - generic - but good. It is actually a plan for all of MWCOG - not the focused effort that I believe MWAQC has asked for. It is "EJ issues in general" ... NOT ... "Air quality EJ issues".

If MWAQC is not prepared to address issues like broadband, access to health care, water pollution, parking, crime and the huge number of non-air EJ issues - you all should ask for a more focused plan consistent with the MWAQC charge.

Public engagement efforts that fail to deliver on public expectations can be disastrous and cause much more harm than good.

I sensed that both Chairwoman Mink and Chairman Snyder understand this nuance of what MWAQC is trying to do and what they have funding for. I know that MWAQC Vice Chair Dernoga and MWAQC Chair Boddye are also tuned into this issue.

Please have a leadership discussion on needing a much more focused community engagement plan.

Thanks for allowing public participation.

Tad

***** ATTACHMENT 4 *****

Specific Comments on the presentation being made to ACPAC on July 15, 2024 on the Draft Community Engagement Plan

Page 4 ... Step 1: Selection of EJScreen as a key data source to identify underserved communities and locations most impacted by adverse air conditions

Comment - EJ Screen is a nice tool and should be used. That said, EJ Screen has already been run for many EJ areas in the DC region. U of M, EPA and some communities have completed EJ Screen analysis. A smaller effort to supplement the existing work to identify new EJ areas would be helpful. That said, the contractor needs to be specific on which EJ Screen they will use. In the DC region, there are three versions that give you slightly different answers ... an EPA version, a U of M version and an MDE version.

MWAQC does not have the time or resources to reinvent the wheel ... an aggressive, action oriented plan must be adopted within 1 year.

Page 8 ... Step 2: Leverage the power of EJScreen to create a new composite indicator index, highlighting areas and populations most impacted by adverse air conditions

Comment - EJ Screen can not do a good job with this as it really does not include any air quality information specific to EJ areas. It includes some limited monitoring information from monitors that are generally very far away from actual EJ areas and does not include any of the

data from any of the community-based air monitoring that has been done. EJ Screen is a very helpful tool ... it is primarily driven by demographics ... but can not be used to create a ranking or index if the primary policy driver is air quality and air quality hot-spots in EJ areas.

EJ Screen includes very limited emissions data ... and in some cases no emissions data . What would be very, very useful for MWAQC to do ... would be to use the detailed emissions inventory that is already prepared for the ozone and PM SIPs ... for stationary, mobile and area sources, to create emission density maps at the community scale. This would be a powerful tool to use if the goal of the MWAQC EJ Action Plan is to reduce exposure and risk from air pollution in EJ areas. It would be even better if MWCOG could supplement the SIP based emission density maps with air toxics emissions data and density maps that are available from EPA as part of their AirToxScreen Program (formerly NATA). By combining the emission inventory density maps for both criteria and toxic air pollutants a very good picture of where the key air pollution issue in EJ areas (cumulative exposure to many air pollutants at the same time) shows very high, inequitable air pollution risks.

MWAQC does not have the time or resources to reinvent the wheel ... an aggressive, action oriented plan must be adopted within 1 year.

Page 14 to 17 ... Step 3: Create a draft equitable and inclusive stakeholder engagement plan for phases 1 and 2

Comment - Listening sessions and community meetings are a very good thing. That said, for the past five years there have been many, many,

many listening sessions and community meetings in EJ communities and in other venues across the DC region. There are meetings like these going on right now in the region. A smaller and more focused effort to supplement the existing work to have appropriate listening sessions and community meetings in new EJ areas or at different venues would be helpful.

MWAQC does not have the time or resources to reinvent the wheel ... an aggressive, action oriented plan must be adopted within 1 year.

Page 18 to 32 ... Steps 4, 5, 6 and 7

Comment - These are all well thought out approaches to effective community engagement. That said ... much of this work has already been done in the MWAQC region by communities and groups supporting communities.

What seems to be a focus is that the effort will take public engagement, public participation, community input and community driven decision making very seriously. That said, the draft plan does not recognize ... at all ... any of the vast amount of work that has already been done by communities and others and that the DC region does not need to start from scratch. The DC region is ready to talk less about the problem and to actually begin to fix the problem.

A smaller and more focused effort to supplement the existing work outlined in steps 4 to 7 would be helpful.

MWAQC does not have the time or resources to reinvent the wheel ...
an aggressive, action oriented plan must be adopted within 1 year.