



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee  
Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee

**FROM:** Stephen Walz, Director, Department of Environmental Planning

**SUBJECT:** Consensus Recommendations on Multi-Sector Working Group (MSWG)  
Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategies

**DATE:** January 27, 2016

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The COG Board directed COG staff to work with a Policy Level Working Group of elected officials to develop and advise the COG Board on a consensus package of recommended Multi-Sector Working Group (MSWG) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions strategies for incorporation into a regional action plan. The Working Group met on January 7, 2016, at which time they reviewed a staff proposed package of consensus recommendations.

After discussion, the Working Group requested that COG staff survey professional staff in each local jurisdiction or state, as appropriate, as to how the reduction strategies could be implemented in their jurisdiction. The Working Group also requested that their staff be asked if there were other GHG reduction strategies not included in the proposed recommended consensus package that should be included. The Policy Level Working Group asked COG staff complete this survey and report back the summarized responses to the Policy Level Working Group in the next 2 to 3 months.

## BACKGROUND

In December 2014, the TPB and MWAQC affirmed COG's voluntary greenhouse gas reduction goal of reducing emissions to 80% below 2005 levels by 2050 and committed staff and resources to support a multi-sector, multi-disciplinary professional working group to be convened by COG to:

- Identify viable, implementable local, regional, and state actions to reduce GHG emissions in four sectors (Energy, the Built Environment, Land Use, and Transportation)
- Quantify the benefits, costs and implementation timeframes of these actions;
- Explore specific GHG emission reduction targets in each of the four sectors; and
- Jointly develop an action plan for the region

From January to October 2015, a MSWG consisting of 79 professional staff from state, local and regional agencies met six times to identify and review potential GHG reduction strategies for the Energy, the Built Environment, Land Use, and Transportation sectors and to explore GHG emission reduction goals and targets.

A consultant performed a detailed technical analysis of 22 identified GHG emission reduction strategies at "viable" and "stretch" levels. A viable level was one that was generally considered to be consistent with local actions proposed by at least some localities across the region and could be implementable by 2040. A stretch level was generally considered going beyond local plans and not to be implementable until after 2040.

The consultant then prepared an Interim Technical Report quantifying the potential GHG emission

reduction benefits of each of the 22 strategies at both a viable and stretch level. This was reviewed by the MSWG and presented to the TPB, MWAQC, and the Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) in September, and to the COG Board in October.

Feedback on the Interim Technical Report findings from the policy committees and other groups included that while some strategies are ready for action but that there would be considerable difficulty in implementing other viable and stretch strategies. Further, some asked whether the limited GHG emission reduction potential of some of the strategies was worth the significant policy actions that would be required to implement these strategies at this time.

When the Interim Technical Report findings were presented at the October 14<sup>th</sup> COG Board meeting, the COG Board passed a resolution directing staff to work with a policy level working group, composed of a representative group of elected officials selected from the membership of the TPB, MWAQC, CEEPC and COG Boards, to develop a consensus package of recommended of greenhouse gas reductions strategies that could be incorporated into a regional action plan.

## **CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS**

In response to the COG Board resolution, members representing the COG Board, TPB, MWAQC and CEEPC were appointed by the COG Board Chair to serve on an Elected Official Policy Level Working Group. Staff developed a proposed, or strawman, consensus package of MSWG GHG reductions strategies for review by this Working Group.

The consensus package consisted of recommendations in the 3 tiers:

- The elements of the 22 MSWG strategies that could be supported/implemented across the entire COG region;
- The elements of the 22 MSWG strategies that individual jurisdictions would choose to implement;
- The elements of the 22 MSWG strategies, mostly stretch strategies, that would be put off now for further consideration in the future.

The staff proposed Consensus Recommendations are presented in Attachment A.

## **JANUARY 7, 2016 MEETING**

The Elected Official Policy Level Working Group met on January 7, 2016. Staff presented an overview of the Interim Technical Report findings and the strawman consensus recommendations strategies. After discussion, the Policy Level Working Group requested that COG staff survey professional staff in each local jurisdiction or state, as appropriate, as to how the reduction strategies could be implemented in their jurisdiction. The members of the Policy Level Working Group wanted additional input from the professional staff before they could commit to strategies proposed. The policy level working group also requested that their professional staff be asked if there are other GHG reduction strategies not included in the proposed recommended consensus package that should be.

Because of the time spent on discussion of the staff proposed Consensus Recommendations, the Working Group did not address (1) National Level Strategies for Advocacy, (2) MSWG Recommendations on Goals and Targets and (3) Action Plan Development. These were deferred until a future meeting of the Working Group.

## NEXT STEPS

In response to the recommendation of the Policy Level Working Group, staff are preparing a survey questionnaire to be sent to key professional staff in each jurisdiction with sector-specific expertise. The questionnaire will ask the how recommended MSWG GHG reduction strategies could be implement in their jurisdiction. They will also be asked if there are other GHG reduction strategies not included in the proposed recommended consensus package that should be included.

Staff expects to mail out the survey questionnaire by the end of January, ask for responses in February, and summarize the results in March. The next meeting date of the Policy Level Working Group will be set once the responses to the survey questionnaire have been received.

### Attachments

1. Staff proposed consensus recommendations for region-wide implementation
2. Staff proposed consensus recommendations for selected local implementation
3. Staff proposed consensus recommendations for future consideration
4. Estimated GHG reductions for region-wide and local implementation strategies