



METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIR QUALITY COMMITTEE (MWAQC)

February 23, 2022
12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Webinar

Chair: Takis Karantonis, Arlington County

MEETING SUMMARY

MWAQC MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

- Takis Karantonis, Arlington County (Chair)
- Tad Aburn, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Dr. Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County
- Sarah Bagley, City of Alexandria
- Tom Ballou, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Joann Barr, City of Laurel
- Michele Blair, City of Laurel
- Anita Bonds, District of Columbia
- Tanisha Briley, City of Gaithersburg
- Collin Burell, District of Columbia
- Tom Dernoga, Prince George's County
- Penny Gross, Fairfax County
- Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, Prince George's County
- Peter Kovar, City of Takoma Park
- Keith Levenchenko, Montgomery County
- Kirk McPike, City of Alexandria
- John Rigg, City of College Park
- Tom Ross, City of Fairfax
- Michelle Russell, Prince George's County
- Maria Sinner, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Dave Snyder, City of Falls Church
- Kari Snyder, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Kristen Weaver, City of Greenbelt

OTHERS

- Hannah Ashenafi, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Ben Burdick, DC Sustainable Energy Unit
- Ashley Counsellor, DC Sustainable Energy Unit
- Samuel Gaber, Fairfax County
- Matthew Gaskin, District Department of Transportation
- Joseph Jakuta, District Department of Energy and Environment
- Irene Kang, District of Columbia
- Demetra McBride, Arlington County
- Regina Moore, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Era Pandya, Air and Climate Policy Advisory Committee
- Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks
- Kalen Roach, DC Sustainable Energy Unit
- Catherine Salarano, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Roger Thunnel, Maryland Department of the Environment

COG STAFF

- Chuck Bean, COG Executive Office
- Leah Boggs, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Maia Davis, COG Department of Environmental Programs
- Jen Desimone, COG Department of

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Programs • Sunil Kumar, COG Department of Environmental Programs • Tim Masters, COG Department of Environmental Programs • Erin Morrow, COG Department of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Planning • Wanda Owens, COG Department of Transportation Planning • JC Park, COG Department of Transportation Planning • Kanti Srikanth, COG Executive Office |
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1. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, APPROVE MINUTES, CHAIR’S REMARKS

Takis Karantonis, MWAQC Chair

Chair Takis Karantonis called the meeting to order. There were no public comments. The December MWAQC meeting summary was approved without any changes.

2. COMMITTEE REPORTS

MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Tad Aburn

MWAQC-TAC held a call on February 8:

- TAC is working on the planning process for NAAQS attainment. It looked like the region was going to meet the ozone standard, but it now appears that the EPA is going to take action to determine that the area is not yet in attainment. This would bump the region up into a new category and give us a new attainment date. TAC is currently working on two possible scenarios; one assumes that the region meets the standard, and a maintenance plan would need to be developed, and the other assumes the region does not meet the standard and the region is bumped up and will be required to develop an attainment plan.
- TAC has also begun to discuss new emission reduction measures that could be implemented in the metropolitan Washington region. Additional emission reductions would help reduce ozone levels and would help to better protect public health. The region is likely to need new control measures as part of the new planning process. Even if the region meets the current standard, EPA is in the process of setting a tougher standard. Many of the emission reduction measures would have significant benefits for communities who are underserved, overburdened communities. Recommendations of potential control measure strategies will be provided to MWAQC at some point in the summer.

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) – Era Pandya (Vice Chair)

ACPAC held a webinar meeting on January 24:

- From November 19 to January 19, ACPAC conducted recruitment to replace three members who were cycling out of the committee at the end of January. There was one seat open from DC and two seat open from VA. ACPAC received 13 applications. COG staff presented the recommended appointments at the February 9th MWAQC Executive Committee meeting and the three final appointments were approved on February 14.
- At the next meeting, March 21, ACPAC will have a fully approved committee membership of 18 members. Between now and the next meeting, ACPAC will outline the 2022 committee priorities, keeping in mind CEEPC’s and MWAQC’s priorities.

Clean Air Partners – Jen Desimone

Clean Air Partners have been involved in the following:

1. Poster Contest

The Clean Air Partners annual Poster Contest is open for submissions. The contest is open to local students in grades 4-8. Posters should have a theme of air or climate. The deadline is March 25th with winners announced on April 22nd.

2. Science Fairs

This year, Clean Air Partners will again be involved in local science fairs throughout the region. Most of these will be virtual. Projects relating to air quality and climate will be evaluated to win a Clean Air Partners sponsored community award. Fairs include Prince Williams County, Fairfax County (including Falls Church), Loudoun County, Frederick County/city, NOVA (includes Arlington/ Alexandria), Montgomery County (DC submitting with Montgomery Co), Prince George County, Anne Arundel County.

3. Summer Campaign

Clean Air Partners is in the process of planning this year's summer campaign. The campaign will be kicked-off during Air Quality Awareness Week, which is the first week of May. It will be a digital campaign including paid social media, partnering with local social media influencers, and outreach to the media and meteorologists. Each day will have a different air quality related theme or challenge.

Additional campaigns will be planned throughout the year.

Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) – Maia Davis

CEEPC held a webinar meeting on January 26:

- CEEPC has new leadership this year. Koran Saines representing Loudoun County is the new CEEPC Chair, and Patrick Wohan from the City of College Park together with Mary Cheh from the District of Columbia will be serving as Vice Chairs.
- The CEEPC Legislative Committee has been very active in this year's state legislative session. The committee has written several comment letters including a letter opposing the repeal of the Community Energy and Flood Preparedness Act in Virginia, which supports the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The committee also opposed the delay of the Advanced Clean Cars Program and sent letters supporting local governments' ability to adopt more stringent energy efficiency codes. The committee sent letters supporting the District's Climate Commitment Act and the District's net zero energy standard. The committee has sent letters of support for the Maryland Energy Administration's Resiliency Hub Grant Program, as well as the Sustainable Maryland Program. The CEEPC Legislative Committee continues to track state legislation.

3. LOCAL AND STATE UPDATES

Local Members and State Air Agencies

- Tom Ross (City of Fairfax) said that for the past year, the city has not been charging fares for their local bus system (CUE: City-University Energysaver Bus System) because of the pandemic. The city has decided to try a three-year pilot effort for a no fare bus program. The city will also be undertaking a marketing campaign to increase visibility of this program, as well as ridership. The intended benefits will be reduced traffic and improved air quality.
- Joseph Jakuta (DOEE) said that DOEE finalized their NOx RACT regulation for the 2015 NAAQS. The District now has stricter standards for new and existing boilers. It also adds emission standards for non-emergency stationary generators.

4. UPDATES ON AIR QUALITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Sunil Kumar, COG Environmental Engineer

The metropolitan Washington region was initially designated as a Marginal Nonattainment Area (NAA) for 2015 Ozone Standard. The region failed to attain by the deadline (August 2021) based on 2018-

2020 design value (DV) data. EPA was expected to redesignate area as a Moderate NAA by February 3, 2022. This was delayed and the area is required to attain by August 2024 based on 2021-2023 DV and submit an Attainment Plan by January 1, 2023. The MWAQC Work Program includes development of Attainment Plan. The region attained the standard based on draft 2019-2021 DV data. States will certify the 2021 data by May 1, 2022, and EPA is expected to issue a Clean Data Determination (CDD) shortly after that. The CDD suspends Attainment Plan requirements and allows states to request EPA to redesignate the region as a Maintenance Area. A Maintenance Plan would then be required with no statutory deadline. The District's request to invalidate 2020 ozone season data is unlikely to be accepted by EPA. The MWAQC Work Program also includes development of Maintenance Plan.

COG staff are working on developing components of both Attainment and Maintenance Plans and are tracking EPA's actions (bump-up to Moderate NAA or issuance of CDD). Depending on EPA's action, regions would move to develop either an Attainment or Maintenance Plan. This is expected in May/June 2022. The State Implementation Plan (SIP) schedule may shift to accommodate timing and availability of inputs needed for SIPs. Both of those plans will provide new Motor Vehicle Emissions Budgets (MVEBs) based on EPA's latest on road emission model by Fall 2023. COG staff will assist Virginia DEQ in association with the District and Maryland in developing 1-Hour Ozone Standard Maintenance Plan for Virginia, which is needed for Virginia's Nonattainment New Source Review certification requirements for the 2015 ozone standard.

Regarding emission control measures, COG staff are currently focusing on developing strategies to reduce emissions and soliciting ideas from members to reduce emissions and improve public health. MDE has already given staff four ideas to focus on and report back in July 2022. The District, Virginia, and locals will also be asked over the next several months for their input. COG staff are preparing to send out a request to all agencies for their input to the control measures development process.

Discussion:

- The ozone calculations (ozone design values) are calculated for every monitor in the region. There are currently 14 monitors in the region. Staff take the highest value, which becomes the reasonable design value. This value is used to assess whether the standard was attained or not.
- Local and outside sources contribute to the region's ozone levels. There are coal power plants in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia that contribute to elevated ozone levels in this region. However, there is still local contribution to these levels, and this can be significant. Both local and outside sources need to be addressed in an Attainment or Maintenance Plan.
- There are four broad categories of sources and on road transportation sources remains one of the important sources, especially in terms of Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) pollution, which is the main driver of ozone exceedance in this area. Once MDE and Virginia DEQ have the results of their photochemical modeling, staff will be able to say exactly how many parts per billion (ppb) on road sources contribute to different monitors in the region. It is likely that on road sources contribute 35 to 40 percent of total NO_x emissions in this area. COG staff will be planning to address this contribution with the control measures work.
- The Attainment Plan requires more comprehensive analysis, including photochemical modeling. It also requires a Reasonable Further Progress plan, where a total 15 percent emission reduction for VOC and NO_x pollution must be shown between the base year and the attainment year (2017-2023). The Maintenance Plan is simpler. In this case, the standard is attained, and the plan requires proof that the area will continue to attain the standard in the future. This plan includes emission inventories to show that the future emissions will be lower than what they are in the present. There is no photochemical modeling requirement. There are no specific emission reduction requirements since the standard has been attained.

5. LOCAL MEMBER INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE AIR

Benjamin Burdick and Ashley Counsellor, DC SEU

The District of Columbia's Sustainable Energy Utility (DC SEU) was created by the Clean and Affordable Energy Act passed in 2008. DC SEU manages a number of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs in the District, and is operated by VEIC, which runs national energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. One of DC SEU's performance benchmarks is to reduce metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO₂e) annually by about 5,000 MT CO₂e. This is the first time that the DC SEU has been focused on a GHG emission reduction measure. VEIC has done this work before; developing Technical Reference Manuals (TRMs) for energy and GHG emission savings. The District passed the Leaf Blower Regulation Amendment Act in 2018. This was primarily focused on noise reduction, but health and safety considerations, as well as GHG emission reductions were a secondary focus of this legislation. This legislation became effective as of January 1, 2022. Gas rebates are no longer allowed in the District and fines of up to \$500 are issued per instance of use of a gas leaf blower. The rebates were designed to encourage residents to make the switch to electric leaf blowers.

DC SEU's program offers both commercial and residential leaf blower rebates. For the commercial rebate, they offer a \$75 rebate per electric leaf blower bought for each business that is licensed in the District (up to five leaf blowers per business per fiscal year). This is not limited to lawn care businesses, but also encompasses condo associations, universities or other businesses that have lawns to maintain. For residents, the program offers a \$50 rebate for an electric leaf blower for District residents (limited to one leaf blower per customer per fiscal year). These rebates are offered as an online application. It is offered after the purchase and applicants receive the rebate as a check. This program is funded through the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund (SETF). SETF is funded by a surcharge on all utility ratepayers' electric and natural gas bills.

One of the challenges is that many lawncare businesses are not always located in the District; the majority of them are located in either Maryland or Virginia. Since they still do work in the District, it was decided that they should still be offered the rebate. If this is the case, those businesses need to provide their District business license to confirm that they actually do work in the District. Other challenges have included market or product skepticism, as well as the upfront costs for businesses, especially as the rebate does not cover costs of multiple batteries and backup systems. The proper disposal of the gas leaf blowers was another issue. These challenges presented an opportunity for greater collaboration across jurisdictions. Coordinated outreach so that people are aware of the gas leaf blower ban is crucial, and DC SEU collaborated with agencies in Maryland to hold educational events and coordinate outreach. DC SEU has also worked with local stores and a couple of the manufacturers, but this kind of outreach is ongoing.

Mary Travaglini, Montgomery County

Montgomery County is proposing a change to their noise law, which would ban on the sale and use of gas leaf blowers within six months and a year from the date that the law is adopted respectively. It is similar to the District's law in that it falls under the noise law, which already has a fine; a \$500 initial fine and a \$750 fine for repeat offenses. If a company is using the gas leaf blower, the fine would go to them. If a residential user is using one, the fine would go to them. A ban on the sale and use of gas leaf blowers was just proposed in the state legislature. This House Bill (HB 934) would take the burden off of counties and municipalities having to regulate this equipment. The proposed ban on sale of gas leaf blowers would take effect in January of 2024, and the ban would take effect in January of 2025. The first violation would be a warning and the second violation is not to exceed \$500.

Montgomery County recognizes that there is an upfront cost of switching to electric leaf blowers but compared to the upfront cost of a new gas leaf blower, the electric is still less expensive. Alongside rebates, such as in the District, and other promotional sales, the electric leaf blower actually has more power, is easier to start, operates at a lower frequency, weighs almost half as much, doesn't have a hot motor or an exhaust, and it doesn't produce any emissions. Regarding environmental justice, the electric leaf blowers are certainly better for workers. Operational costs are also lower for the electric leaf

blower, as it costs \$22 to run a standard gas leaf blower for eight hours, and just 40 cents to run the electric leaf blower for that duration. Maintenance is also more burdensome with gas leaf blowers.

Montgomery County has a big Go Electric event on March 19 that is open to the public. The event will be promoting everything electric, including electric cars, solar power, lightbulb exchanges, battery yard equipment, etc. ACE Hardware and EGO will have a sales promotion for electric equipment, including leaf blowers, at stores in Montgomery County. In the spring, the county will add a \$100 rebate for landscapers. The landscaper will have to prove that they work in Montgomery County, they will be limited to two leaf blower purchases, and they will have to return their gas leaf blower to get the rebate to make sure these are coming off the streets. \$50 rebates for electric leaf blowers will be offered to residents as well. These rebates are funded by a small Pepco grant.

Discussion:

- In Virginia, legislative action on gas leaf blowers is limited. Rebate incentives are very effective in these scenarios and there is a direct correlation that has been demonstrated where financial incentives similar to this kind of rebate result in greater adoption of energy efficient equipment. Outreach is crucial in these cases, but it has been shown to be effective.
- The \$500 fine for use of gas leaf blowers is typically given to the commercial entity, not the property owner where the equipment is being used.
- There is a perceived lack of performance equivalency for electric leaf blowers and electric lawncare implements, both in terms of the duration they can be used, as well as their performance. Another issue is that many lawncare professionals are first generation immigrants and do not have much disposable income. The battery technology has improved a great deal in terms of duration and performance. The rebates together with the energy savings from electric leaf blowers ultimately make up for the upfront costs, but outreach is crucial.
- Montgomery County's noise ordinance sets a decibel limit. However, this does not take frequency into account. Many people complain about gas leaf blowers because they have a high frequency sound, which penetrates walls more easily. Electric leaf blowers do not have this high pitch frequency.

6. CLEAN AIR PARTNERS PUBLIC AWARENESS SURVEY

Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks

Every three years, Clean Air Partners releases a public awareness survey to gauge public awareness and attitudes on air quality in the Baltimore-Washington region. The 2021 survey had a large sample size. 2,261 residents of the Baltimore-Washington region were surveyed. Three methods were used to reach them: Online consumer panels, traditional USPS mail, and phone. The survey was made available in English, as well as Spanish. The composition of the survey sample included a range of respondents of different ages and races, which matched the census profile for the region. An additional element of this survey was an in-depth interview, which was conducted online with 15 participants selected from the survey. These interviews were roughly 40 minutes in length and the aim was to get qualitative data on perceptions of air quality, climate change, and awareness of inequities.

The results show that between the 2015 and 2018 surveys there was a big uptick in the perception of air pollution as a big problem. This has held steady between the 2018 and 2021 surveys. Respondents that are more located within the urban core have a more negative view of air pollution and feel more impacted by air quality issues. Respondents from the outer suburban areas of the region have less concern about air quality. There are opposing perceptions that air quality in the region has gotten worse (39 percent) versus improved (17 percent). 34 percent of respondents feel that air quality has stayed the same. The interviews showed that people strongly link worsening air quality to population growth, traffic congestion and high-density development. A hotter climate and more intense heat waves also impact perceptions on worsening air quality. 56 percent of respondents also felt that the pandemic had

impacted air quality positively. Many respondents stated that this was likely due to less traffic and changing mobility patterns. Additionally, there was a negative trendline for respondents' recollection of Air Quality Index (AQI) color codes. Respondents showed less recall of color codes, and when they did, they recalled color codes that were less severe than in past years. The main response to code orange or red days was to stay inside. Regarding climate change, 70 percent of respondents feel that this is a big problem. 65 percent of respondents felt that climate change has gotten worse over the last five years. Responses reflect that most people in the region (85 percent of respondents) believe climate change is attributable to human activity and natural causes.

The survey tested a broad suite of actions that people might take to improve air quality. The sense of personal agency and feeling empowered to take action to improve air quality has been declining over the past years. In 2015, 68 percent of respondents felt that they could take action compared to 60 percent in 2021. In 2021, 40 percent of respondents felt that either they do not know whether they can take action, or they outright disagree that they can impact air quality. The top actions people have taken to improve air quality according to the survey include turning off lights or electronics when not in use, replacing incandescent lightbulbs with energy efficient lightbulbs, and adjusting their thermostats. Switching to a hybrid or electric vehicle and installing solar panels remain at the bottom of the list of actions people have taken to improve air quality, which is expected due to the upfront costs of those actions. The biggest opportunities for behavior change include actions such as planting a tree, teleworking, and switching to electric lawn equipment. One takeaway about these actions is that some people do not know how the action impacts air quality. For example, many respondents had heard of refueling after dusk, but did not know why this was an impactful action.

Regarding equity, 68 percent of respondents agree that air pollution impacts some groups of people more than others. There was a bell curve in terms how respondents felt that air pollution impacts their community compared to other areas. Equity remains an important aspect of this work for people in the region. Respondents' main motivation to improve air quality is to leave a more livable earth and the second most popular one is to help reduce or prevent asthma and other breathing problems. When asked what phrase respondents would be most motivated by, the favored motivation was to improve air quality versus reduce air pollution. A key insight from one participant was to focus on what "we" can do, not on what the individual should do.

7. ADJOURN

Takis Karantonis, MWAQC Chair

Chair Takis Karantonis adjourned the meeting. The next MWAQC meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2022.