

Meeting Summary

COG Climate Change Steering Committee – Inaugural Meeting May 23, 2007

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Purpose

Chair Nancy Floreen called the Climate Change Steering Committee to order at approximately 9:30 am.

Members (and alternates) present:

- § The Honorable Nancy Floreen, Montgomery County Council, Chair
- § The Honorable Mary Cheh, Council of the District of Columbia
- § The Honorable David Snyder, City of Falls Church Council
- § The Honorable Judith Davis, Mayor, City of Greenbelt
- § The Honorable Lori Waters, Loudoun County
- § Corey Buffo, District of Columbia Department of the Environment
- § Mark Rawlings, District of Columbia Department of Transportation
- § Tad Aburn, Maryland Department of Environment
- § Mercury Payton, City of Manassas Park
- § Nat Bottigheimer, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Association

Staff/Others present include:

- § David Robertson, Executive Director, COG
- § Stuart Freudberg, Director, Department of Environmental Programs
- § Naomi Friedman, Assistant Executive Director
- § George Nichols, Principal Environmental Planner
- § Leah Boggs, Environmental Planner
- § Joan Rohlf, Chief COG Air Quality Planning
- § Jeff King, Environmental Planner COG Air Quality Planning
- § Ron Kirby, Director, Department of Transportation
- § Barbara Hardy, Fairfax County Health Dept
- § Calvin Smith, HSPPS, COG
- § Paul DeJardin, HSPPS, COG
- § Mike Clifford, DTP, COG
- § Bob Owolabi, Fairfax County DOT

Each Committee member introduced him/her self and made a brief comment describing the areas of responsibility that relate to the climate change issue. All agreed to serve on this very important and timely committee and several noted that climate change will drive many of the current and future environmental and energy strategies in the region.

Chair Floreen stated that Climate Change is a very worthy endeavor for local governments to address. The COG Board has charged us with a specific responsibility -- to make recommendations for reducing the region's greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to establishing a reduction goal for the region, the committee will consider several other action items, including:

- Measuring local greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on the region;
- Preparing a catalogue of activities currently underway in local jurisdictions;
- Identifying best practices for local governments;
- Recommending climate change policy and potential advocacy positions on federal, state and local climate change proposals.

Framing the COG Climate Change Initiative

Mr. Robertson noted that COG already has a body of achievement on this issue, yet there is still lot to do to address climate change. Mr. Robertson envisions the Climate Change Steering Committee to serve as a hub, to help to oversee, coordinate, and integrate work happening in different areas of the organization. For example, MWAQC and its technical committee (along with some other experts) may serve as the lead on greenhouse gas inventorying. Other committees/departments will focus on other aspects of the built environment, cooperative purchasing, and fleet conversions. The Steering Committee will help to coordinate and leverage these resources. Mr. Robertson asked participants to review their Steering Committee Briefing Notebook, which provides background information on this topic.

Chair Floreen asked Mr. Robertson to further clarify what climate change is. He indicated the best science available indicates that climate change already is occurring, with potentially negative impacts. Mr. Freudberg added that scientists concur there is a 90 percent likelihood that humans have contributed to the problem, which will cause both global and local changes, including sea level rise, a rise in salinity of the Chesapeake Bay, and other subtle and more serious changes. Supervisor Waters asked if we were only going to investigate human impacts/causes, or if we are going to look at agriculture as well. She also noted that one approach to addressing GHG is increased use of ethanol, but that approach must also be closely evaluated against the economic feasibility for the local governments in the region. Mr. Freudberg said we also would examine agriculture.

Other Climate Change Initiatives Affecting the Washington Metropolitan Region

Mr. Aburn provided an overview of the Maryland Climate Change Initiative. He indicated that 'leadership by example' is critical not only to achieve state/local improvements but also to help set an example and push forward an environmental agenda. The success of any state program, however, directly depends on what is happening locally and thus he very much looks forward to working with COG. He believes climate change issue will be the dominant air quality issue for at least the next 10 years.

Mr. Aburn indicated the Maryland has tremendous land/water interface that even exceeds that of California. [check he said this] He said there is no doubt that human activity is affecting the climate and that time to act is now. Maryland has already lost coastline and several islands, and is worried about the future of the Blue Crab, extreme weather events, etc. Maryland has joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which is a cap and trade program for electric utilities that creates a public benefits fund with the money collected through carbon fees. This program, which includes an allowance for an auction, could create an annual fund of \$100 million that can be used for conservation programs. He said that reducing greenhouse gases is different than reducing other pollutants, because there is yet no technology that allows you to reduce emissions through end-of-pipe measures, and reductions are only achieved by using less energy. There will be a great need for education/incentives, to help individuals and businesses and utilities understand how to conserve. Chair Floreen asked for additional clarification on cap and trade. Councilwoman Cheh asked if utilities have set allowances and what happens when they exhaust these allowances. Mr. Aburn indicated they can buy allowances, and that there are some checks in the system if allowances are not immediately available. Mr. Payton asked what would happen if a company says it can't afford to participate in the auction. Mr. Auburn said there are ways to purchase offsets, and the program will work out the bugs. This regional effort is trying to set the stage for a national program. Chair Floreen indicated we will want to talk further about cap and trade at future meetings.

Mr. Auburn also mentioned the Maryland Climate Change Commission, and Maryland reduction goals, which are achieving 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2006 levels by 2050. He also reviewed some highlights from District of Columbia and Virginia. Supervisor Waters asked about the energy value of ethanol, and some concerns that have been raised about overall emissions savings – if you include production. Mr. Auburn said this is one option, but another is more fuel efficient vehicles and other changes. He said there are other drivers for using ethanol, which include energy security concerns. He suggested that we may want to invite a representative from the University of Maryland to address our group regarding local impacts, etc. See PPT.

Mr. Robertson mentioned that the Washington Board of Trade want to focus their fall Potomac Conference on the topic of climate change/regional greening. COG is participating on the planning committee and will monitor the effort for opportunities for collaboration.

Preview of Greenhouse Gas Inventory

COG staff described their work putting together an initial regional inventory on greenhouse gases. This work was assisted by the MWAQC technical advisory committee, with input from other experts, including energy staff from Arlington and Montgomery Counties. Ms. Rohlfs and Mr. King indicated that several local governments in the region, including Arlington, Fairfax, Montgomery, and the District of Columbia, have performed local greenhouse gas inventories. For the preliminary inventory, COG examined only the two most major sources, including: electricity production and consumption (most of total), and transportation fuels and consumption (38.5% of regional total). Increasing VMT will lead to growing mobile emissions. Initial figure for total regional CO₂ emission = 57 million tons in 2000. Other sources that will need to be added include: solid waste, wastewater, other mobile sources, and land-use.

Mr. Snyder noted the upward trend in mobile emissions. Ms. Cheh noted that European use of energy is flat. Mr. Freudberg indicated our increases are due to both population increases and also per capita increases in the use of energy.

Issues the Committee will need to address in the future involve: which baseline year to measure from, what units of measure to use, and whether to include energy imports – from out of region (e.g. should inventory include emissions from energy consumption, or just generation).

Overview of Key Tasks: Preview of the Climate Change Work Plan

Mr. Freudberg reviewed the proposed Climate Change Work Plan. Questions/Comments included:

- Chair Floreen urged us to refer to the recent carbon offset article that she believes was in *Wall Street Journal or New York Times*)
- Mr. Bottingheimer said it would be useful to know what is expected of steering committee members, how they can help, and what happens in between the deadlines for the work products.
- Mr. Auburn said it is important to not wait till all the studies are in until we take action. Important to look for “low-hanging fruit”, and things we can do now (e.g. wind purchasing, clean car legislation, etc.) Maryland is trying to integrate that type of thinking into their work, a way to take some bite sized pieces.
- Mr. Freudberg indicated at our next meeting we will have a revised work plan.
- Chair Floreen suggested we don't reinvent the wheel, but rather identify the other wheels. She also suggested we try to get feedback from folks not at the meeting.
- Email to Mr. Freudberg and Mr. Nichols with additional comments.

Committee Management

- Mary Cheh and Gerry Connolly will serve as co-chairs of the Steering Committee. Next meeting is June 27.
- The group briefly discussed who else we may want to invite to meeting. Chair Floreen asked whether we may want to consider inviting academics, or someone from the civic sector.
- Mayor "J" Davis suggested we notify the local government groups and associations so they know what we are doing. We should create an email list of interested parties. We want to be perceived as an open committee. Mr. Freudberg suggested we could also reach out to business community.
- Ms. Waters suggested a conference call may work to augment/replace in-person meetings.

Next Steps, Next Meeting

- Will discuss work plan
- Members of Committee can share what they are doing.
- Would be interesting to learn more about legislative measures.
- Would be interesting to learn more about the science.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 pm.