



# COG ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TOOLKIT UPDATE

## Community Listening Session #1

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ACPAC EJ Toolkit Community Listening Session  
March 17, 2025



Metropolitan Washington  
**Council of Governments**

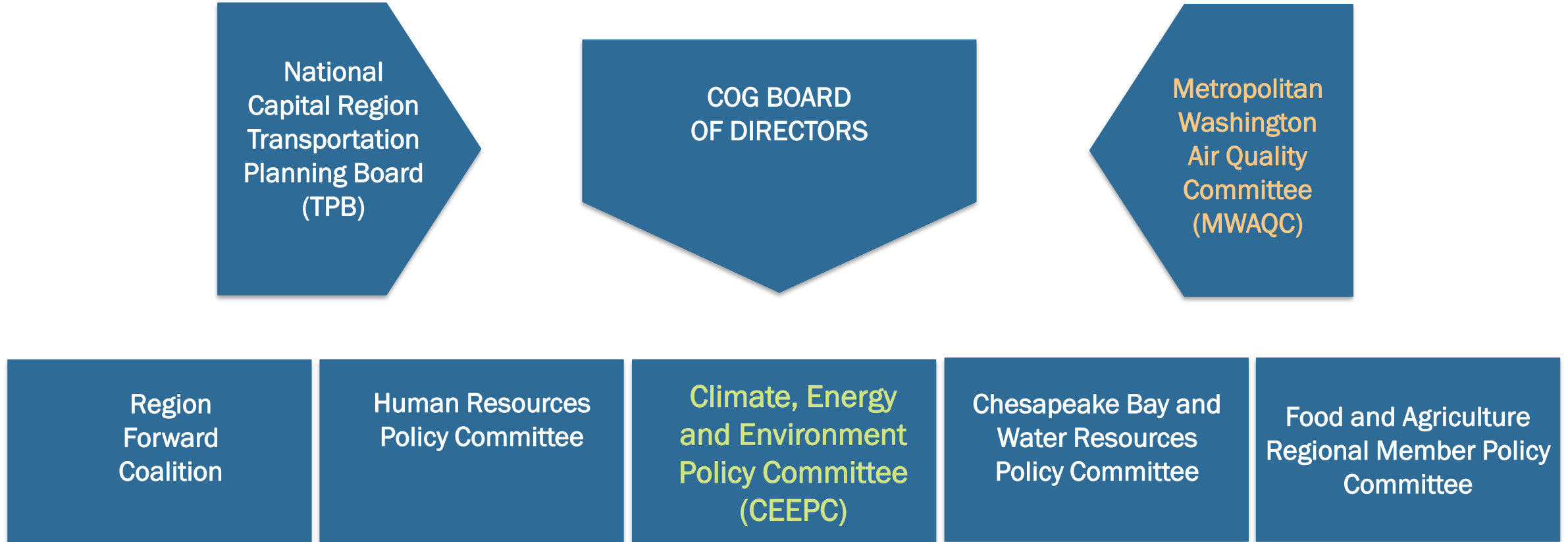
Agenda Item #3

# About COG

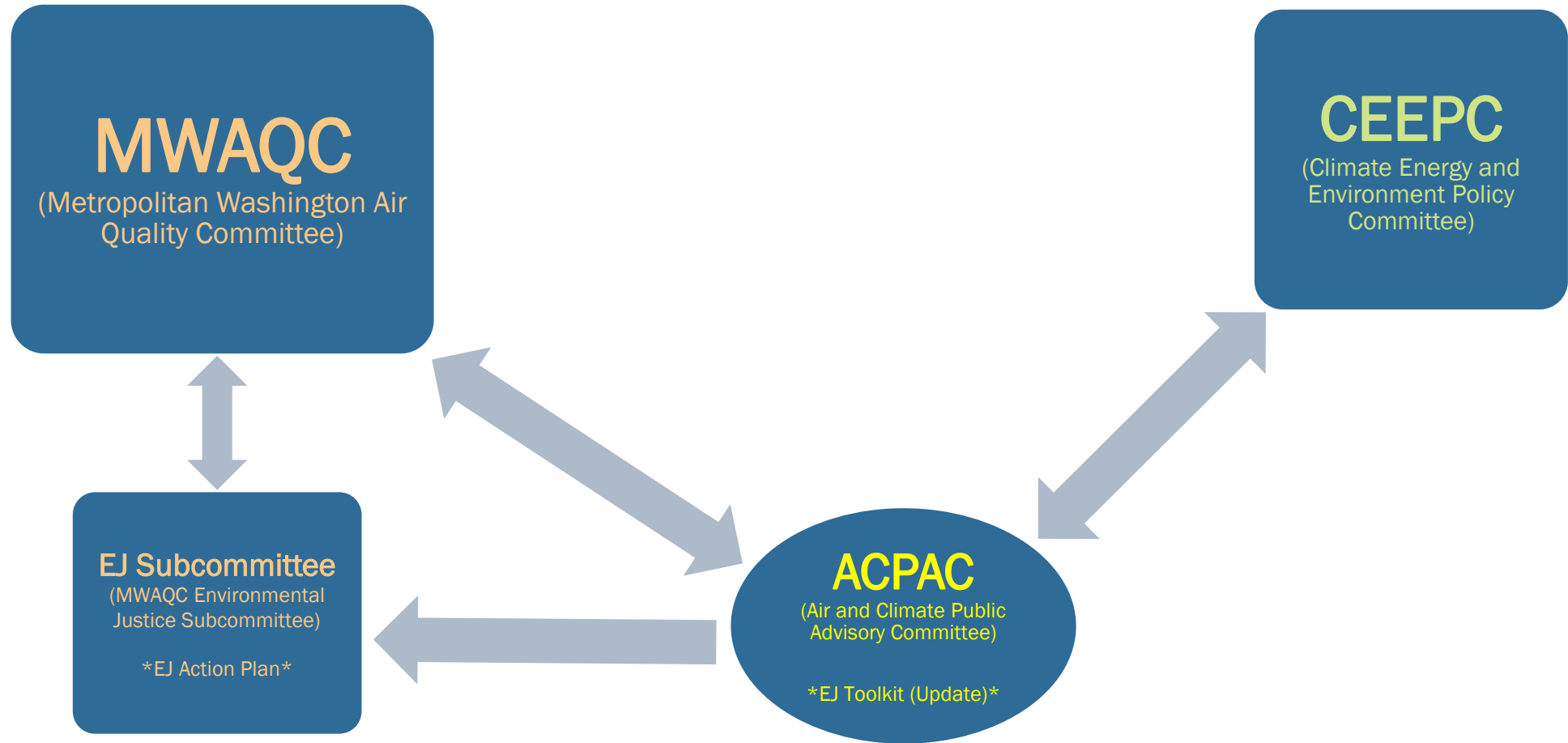
- An independent, nonprofit association founded in 1957.
- Brings area leaders together to address regional issues and plan for the future.
- 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress, representing about 6 million residents.
- Home of the Transportation Planning Board, the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- 125+ staff.



# COG Boards and Policy Committees



# Committee Relationship Structure



# ACPAC Oversight, Mission, and Members

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## Oversight

- Established in 1993
- Serves as an advisor to MWAQC and CEEPC

## Mission

- Act as a mechanism for facilitating a dialogue among diverse interest groups, the community at large, CEEPC, and MWAQC
- Comment on the air quality aspects of climate change issues; and to assume such other responsibilities as MWAQC or CEEPC shall determine

18 Members: 6 each from DC/MD/VA

- Citizens/community members apply
- MWAQC appoints

# 2017 Environmental Justice (EJ) Toolkit

Guidance to policymakers on incorporating social equity, cultural sensitivity, and community health considerations into air quality, climate, and energy planning:

- **Approach #1:** Identifying Potentially Vulnerable Populations
- **Approach #2:** Providing Meaningful Engagement Opportunities
- **Approach #3:** Assessing Community Impacts and Needs
- **Approach #4:** Developing Metrics
- **Approach #5:** Providing Data, Information, and Resources for Communities
- **Approach #6:** Using Citizen Science
- **Approach #7:** Developing Community Leadership
- **Approach #8:** Supporting Economic and Workforce Development
- **Approach #9:** Mainstreaming Environmental Justice into Public Planning and Programs

<https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2017/07/27/environmental-justice-toolkit/>

# EJ Toolkit Update

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- Purpose of Toolkit & Update Refresh
  - To provide recommendations or strategies for local governments to more effectively and appropriately engage vulnerable/disfavored communities on issues related to climate, energy and air quality
    - Update recommendations, best practices, and case studies for engagement.
    - Incorporate new research and EJ engagement tools

# EJ Toolkit Update

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- Process & Timeline
  - COG held two virtual workshops with local government staff that have EJ community engagement experience (February 14, and March 13).
  - Equival will be holding workshops and in-person engagements with community-based organizations and grassroots communities
    - Develop recommendations based on the data gathered from those interviews and outreach events.
    - Present recommendations in May ACPAC meeting and in small focus groups.
- Draft EJ Toolkit COG Comment Period: November - December 2025
- Final Toolkit: February 2026





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# Equival and Community Engagement Process

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- About Equival Partners
  - Washington, D.C.-based consultancy working locally and nationally to use the power of collaborative decision-making to enable strategic collective action.
  - Thirty years of experience working on environmental, equity and justice issues using a collaborative approach, including meeting facilitation and mediation.
- Community Engagement Process
  - Identify and interview local community, environmental justice, and civic leaders to understand how they engage with local leaders on important environmental issues.
  - Conduct outreach at local community and regional events to gauge interests of the wider public.

# Discussion Questions

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1. How would you describe the community (communities) that you are a member of or where you live?
2. What are some topics or issues related to climate, energy, and air that are important to your community/communities?
  - a. Increased flooding
  - b. More hot days and nights
  - c. Pollution and outdoor air quality
  - d. Public and personal health impacts
  - e. Environmental health impacts
  - f. Household energy cost savings through energy efficiency

# Discussion Questions

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2. What are some topics or issues related to climate, energy, and air that are important to your community/communities?
  - g. Access to active and public transportation
  - h. Access to EV chargers and funding
  - i. Access to solar energy and funding
  - j. Data centers (land, water and energy use)
  - k. Green jobs and workforce development
3. How do you/your organization/members prefer to receive information on climate, energy, and air quality issues?
4. What are the greatest challenges and barriers in building a sustained and productive relationship with local government staff in your city or county? What are some examples of successes in building sustained and productive relationships with local government leaders, agencies, and staff in your city or county?

# Discussion Questions

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5. What are some examples of successes in building sustained and productive relationships with local government leaders, agencies, and staff in your city or county?
6. What would successful or satisfying engagement with your city or county government look like?
7. What are the best ways for local governments to ensure that community members are directly involved in decision-making processes?
8. Are there specific actions you believe local governments can take to build long-term trust and establish credibility with your community?

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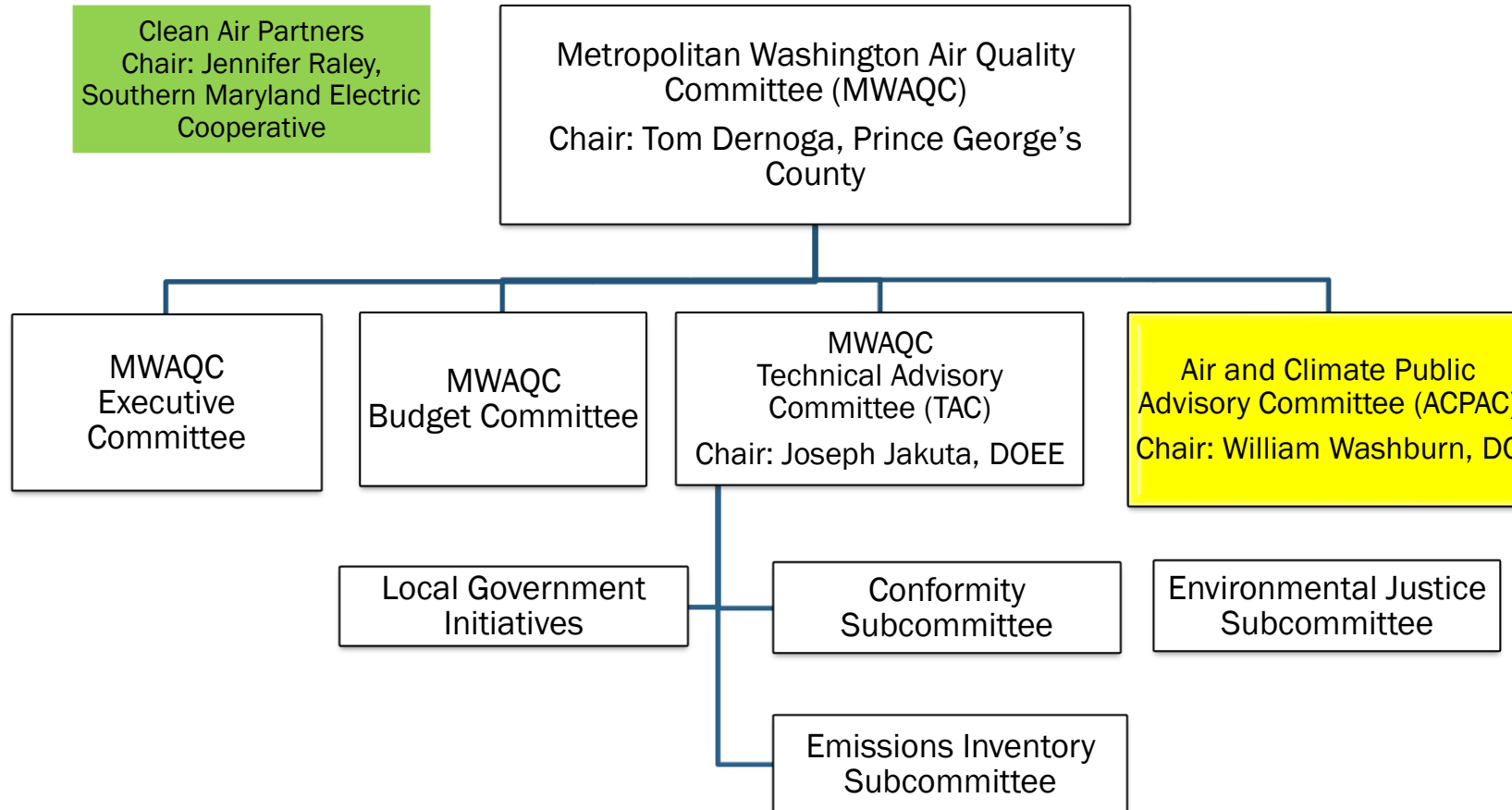
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# Additional Context

# MWAQC Committee Structure

(COG-BMC public-private partnership)





# CEEPC Committee Structure

