Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

AIR AND CLIMATE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ACPAC)

September 21, 2026
5:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.

Webinar information provided to members via email.

Vice Chair: Chris Tandy

DRAFT VIRTUAL MEETING SUMMARY

ACPAC ATTENDEES: Stacey Garfinkle, Alex Johnson, Julie Kimmel, Jack Lyman, Jacqueline Norris, Peter Mecca, Deborah Shprentz, Cameron Ramey, Chris Tandy, James Wang, William Washburn

OTHER ATTENDEES: Laurence Daniels, District of Columbia Office of the People's Council

COG STAFF: Leah Boggs, Madalyn Stoddard

5:30 P.M. **1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**
Chris Tandy, ACPAC Vice Chair

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair (VC) Chris Tandy. The meeting had a quorum and there were no amendments to the agenda. The July 2026 meeting summary was approved with no amendments.

5:45 P.M. **2. CHAIR'S REPORT**
Chris Tandy, ACPAC Vice Chair

- The VC reviewed the September 23 CEEPC meeting agenda.

- Leah Boggs summarized the process that called for developing a memo to outline ACPAC's concerns related to the Ozone Season update made by Sunil Kumar at the July ACPAC meeting. At the July CEEPC meeting, Chair Cindy Dyballa requested a formalized submission of the recommendations. ACPAC Chair Ian Marcus appointed a subcommittee comprised of Chris Tandy, James Wang, and Janet Phoenix to draft the memo. In response to a COG request, PJM revealed that although the US Department of Energy has approved 202c Emergency Orders (section of the Federal Power Act) on data center back up generation during times of grid stress, PJM has not utilized the option. Resources include:
    - https://www.pjm.com/library/filing-order.
    - https://www.energy.gov/ceser/2026-doe-202c-orders

6:00 P.M. **3. UTILITY DISCONNECTIONS IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON REGION**
Leah Bogggs, COG Staff
Maddie Stoddard, COG Intern Staff

Leah Boggs and Maddie Stoddard presented preliminary data analysis on electric and gas utility disconnections in metropolitan Washington. Drawing on data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (via the University of Michigan's Energy Equity Project) and the University of Pennsylvania's Energy Justice Lab disconnection dashboard, staff showed that utility shut-offs have risen sharply since the end of pandemic-era moratoria in 2021. In 2024, the District of Columbia experienced nearly 15,000 household disconnections (about 12,000 electric and 3,000 gas), with only ~54% of those cases reconnected within the same year. In Maryland, data from utilities serving COG jurisdictions indicated approximately 50,000 disconnections (combined electric and gas) in 2024, with a reconnection rate around 83%.

Virginia utilities saw disconnections remain relatively stable through the late 2010s but then surged in 2024 (with an estimated ~375,000 cumulative disconnections reported by regional utilities for that year); however, Virginia does not require reporting of reconnections, making post-shutoff outcomes harder to assess. Staff also noted evidence of changing seasonal patterns in disconnections: for example, median monthly disconnections in Virginia were higher in 2017–2018 during specific extreme weather months, whereas in 2024 disconnections occurred more evenly throughout the year, suggesting that climate-driven temperature extremes outside traditional winter/summer peaks are contributing to year-round affordability challenges. Gas service disconnections showed a downward trend in all three jurisdictions (possibly due to fuel-switching from gas to electric heating), but electricity shut-offs continue to increase across the region.

Staff emphasized a growing gap between disconnections and reconnections, particularly in D.C., as fewer households are able to restore service after falling behind on bills. The presentation concluded by noting potential policy interventions to mitigate disconnections, including recommendations from COG's Environmental Justice Toolkit (e.g., eliminating reconnection fees, forgiving past-due utility debt, and expanding shut-off protections during extreme weather events). In discussion, members considered the influence of weather on disconnection trends – noting that severe cold or heat can trigger surges in non-payments and eventual shut-offs – and suggested the importance of anticipating seasonal spikes with enhanced assistance funding. Staff acknowledged these points, observing that broader outreach and proactive planning (including partnerships with utilities and even non-profit organizations) will be crucial as the region continues to monitor and address energy affordability concerns going forward.

6:25 P.M. **4. OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL – DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
Laurence Daniel's, OPC-DC, Director of Litigation Services

Laurence Daniels discussed energy affordability challenges facing District residents, highlighting potential regulatory conflicts regarding data center operations and air quality monitoring. OPC's research shows that energy burden affects various income levels, with rising costs impacting middle-income households and the energy affordability is a structural issue requiring comprehensive solutions beyond low-income assistance programs. Data centers contribute to increased utility costs, affecting all consumers regardless of energy efficiency measures, as well as strain the energy grid and contribute to risking blackouts. OPC urges regulatory bodies to work to understand energy burden impacts before making decisions that affect utility rates.

Discussion

- ACPAC members express concerns about rising energy costs and their impact on consumers, particularly seniors, and emphasized the need for collaboration and information sharing to address energy challenges effectively.
    - Staff will follow up with OPC related to the $99 late fee for PEPCO customers.
- Advocacy efforts should involve multiple states urging fair energy rate allocation to protect consumers.

6:55 P.M. **5. POLICY COMMITTEE MEMO DISCUSSION**
Leah Boggs, COG Staff
ACPAC Subcommittee Members

The subcommittee reviewed the draft memo, and Leah Boggs reviewed the draft schedule for the policy review. The subcommittee will finalize the memo by the end September/early October, and staff will distribution to CEEPC and MWACQ.

7:30 P.M. **6. NEXT ACPAC MEETING AND ADJOURN**

The next ACPAC meeting is November 16, 2026. VC Tandy adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Documents:
https://www.mwcog.org/events/2026/9/21/air-and-climate-public-advisory-committee/