



Montgomery County Group

March 7, 2019

Dear Councilmember:

The primary goal of the Montgomery County Sierra Club is to achieve an effective and just response to climate disruption in Montgomery County. We urge the County to act commensurate with the accelerating threat posed by rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Effectively reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the County requires an understanding of the **drivers of County emissions**. In the County the leading contributors to emissions are: **buildings (53%) and transportation (41%)**. Our approach to mitigating emissions should reflect this distribution.

To develop a comprehensive and long-term set of priorities the County needs a process that relies on analysis of costs and benefits, engages broad sectors of the community, creates a source of public funds to attack the problem, and provides oversight of governmental climate policies and programs. We urge:

- Promptly arranging for a **team that can provide technical expertise on relative costs and benefits** of various policies/projects, as well as trade-offs, as the Montgomery County Climate Mobilization Workgroup envisioned.
<http://onemontgomerygreen.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ClimateMobilizationReport.pdf>
- Convening of a **broadly representative group** to use the team's technical findings in recommending priorities and a timeline.
- Evaluating **funds for climate programs**, including funds from the Public Service Commission merger orders (86990, 88128, 88158) and possible reallocation of tax incentives. As part of this effort, we urge **providing dedicated funds** for curtailing emissions. Such funds have been developed to address stormwater management and solid waste goals. While there is an energy tax on energy use, raising approximately \$200 million annually, none of it is dedicated to programs that would curtail emissions.
- Ongoing **oversight** of governmental progress in reducing GHG emissions to assure effective use of public resources.

The **key substantive initiatives** that we urge the County to prioritize in the next several months to reduce greenhouse emissions are:

- Adopt energy efficiency benchmarking and other requirements for existing buildings, in order to markedly reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- Adopt aggressive construction codes (e.g., 2018 International Green Construction Code) and other requirements for new buildings that will transition quickly to net zero requirements.
- Accelerate the schedule of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and include dedicated lanes on all BRT routes.
- Replace each retired Ride-on bus with an electric bus.
- Expand opportunities for community solar.
- Develop an integrated zero waste system and close the Dickerson incinerator.

Over the next several months, we expect to elaborate on some of these initiatives and provide additional recommendations.

Montgomery County should lead the way in demonstrating how local government can forge a path to dramatically reducing emissions.

Sincerely,

Dave Sears, Chair, Sierra Club Montgomery County, Maryland

Michal Freedman, Vice Chair

