

MEMORANDUM

To: Prince George's County Council
From: Bill Pugh and Cheryl Cort, Coalition for Smarter Growth
Date: January 24, 2022
Re: Support for the Draft Climate Action Plan and needed improvements

The Coalition for Smarter Growth applauds the County Council's effort to launch the Climate Action Commission. Overall, we think the draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a valuable and important guide to help Prince George's protect its most vulnerable residents and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

CSG supports the plan's adoption and implementation. However, we also bring to your attention improvements to the plan that are needed to better support the County's vision of a prosperous future with new jobs and housing options in walkable, vibrant, transit-oriented communities and where all residents have safe, convenient, affordable and sustainable travel options.

Draft CAP has these great elements:

- Uses equity as a guiding principle and shows how climate change is already adversely impacting residents.
- Supports the county's vision and growth management goals from the Plan 2035 general plan.
- Shows how sprawling land use patterns have worsened emissions and climate change impacts.
- Identifies transit-oriented development as a climate-friendly way to grow and build prosperity.

However, transportation goals and actions in the CAP are weak and need to be strengthened:

The plan fails to meet the 50% reduction by 2030 overall target in large part because the draft CAP does not take sufficient actions to address the largest source of county emissions, transportation. A number of public comments also mentioned this: "Transportation and Reducing VMT" was the second most cited gap in the draft CAP and was also one of the top areas that the public comments wanted to see implemented.

1. Goals for reducing auto-dependence and adopting electric vehicles fall short of regional and national recommendations and need to be strengthened. The regional Transportation Planning Board has shown that to achieve the 2030 climate target:
 - Over 25% of the vehicles on the road must be electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030. In contrast the draft CAP only sets a goal of 15% EV adoption.
 - Even with ambitious adoption of EVs and a clean electric grid, per capita driving must go down by 15-20% by 2030 compared to pre-pandemic levels. However, the draft CAP aims to reduce per capita driving and shift travel to non-auto modes by only 3.6%.
2. Implementation steps must be added for the Chapter VIII goal "Invest in Infrastructure that Increases Transit, Carpooling, and Non-Motorized Travel".
 - Page 75 lists several good ideas to improve transit, walking and biking, but the plan provides no steps to implement these.
 - County is still spending too much money on highway expansion projects that increase traffic and emissions over time - also increasing the distances and money residents spend driving. The plan needs to address this..
3. Transportation demand management (#M-6) needs to be expanded to serve all residents, employers and workers rather than only focusing on County employee teleworking measures.
4. "Vehicle Miles Traveled" is a necessary key measure for the CAP's proposed "Climate Score" evaluation system for land use decisions and capital improvements and should be included.

Further detail on these recommendations can be found [here](#).