

## **Achieving Carbon Neutral Operations in Fairfax County Government**

In April 2019, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board established a Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) to identify ways in which Fairfax County Government and Fairfax County Public Schools could proactively and collaboratively address climate change and environmental sustainability. The JET, which consisted of two representatives from each Board and nine community members, developed a [Final Report](#) in October 2020 with an overarching recommendation that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, School Board, Park Authority and Redevelopment and Housing Authority be energy carbon neutral by 2040. Supporting recommendations were included for county and school operations across the energy, transportation, waste management and recycling, and workforce development focus areas.

Those JET recommendations impacting county operations were the subject of the March and April 2021 Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee meetings. The Board expressed general support for these recommendations but voiced a need for some modifications of the focus area recommendations. At the May 4, 2021 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board voted in favor of the development of policy statements to support the JET's carbon neutral goal and modified focus area recommendations. Proposed policy statements are included below for Board consideration.

### **Carbon Neutrality**

In accordance with the Joint Environmental Task Force's October 2020 recommendation, Fairfax County Government shall be energy carbon neutral by 2040. As an interim goal, the county shall achieve a 50% reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, using FY 2018 as the baseline.

### **Energy**

Fairfax County's building and energy use is one of the largest sources of operational greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, to ensure the successful achievement of the carbon neutrality goal, Fairfax County Government shall take the following actions across the building and energy sector:

- Produce 25% of electricity use from renewable energy generation by 2030, and 50% by 2040, using FY 2018 as the baseline.
- Decrease total energy use from all existing county facilities by 25% by 2030, and 50% by 2040, as compared to the FY 2018 baseline.
- Achieve Net Zero Energy (NZE) standards for all new buildings and major renovation projects beginning planning and design in 2021 and beyond, unless the Director advises the Board otherwise.
- Ensure all facilities entering design are electric-ready by 2022 and electric-only by 2024.

### **Transportation**

County vehicle use is another major source of operational greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, to achieve the carbon neutrality goal, Fairfax County Government shall reduce its energy use from the transportation sector by making the following commitments:

- Transition the Fairfax Connector diesel bus fleet to electric (or other non-carbon emitting alternatives) by 2035, with the caveat that by 2035, 99% of Connector bus fleet miles traveled will be made with non-carbon emitting vehicles. In addition, no diesel buses will be purchased by Fairfax County after FY2024, unless the Director informs the Board as to why.
- Transition the non-bus fleet to electric (or other non-carbon emitting alternatives) by 2035. For non-bus fleet vehicles that may not have non-carbon emitting alternatives, develop a plan to mitigate vehicle emissions.
- Install necessary charging infrastructure for county fleet vehicles. Wherever possible, ensure charging infrastructure can serve school and county operations.
- Apply for grant funding for county fleet vehicles and supporting infrastructure whenever possible.
- Reserve parking spaces for hybrid and electric vehicles at county government buildings.
- Consider the social cost of carbon when evaluating costs for county fleet vehicles.

To further reduce emissions from the transportation sector, the county shall work with local, state and federal governments to facilitate and encourage the use of alternative, multi-modal transportation options in the county and region. Specifically, Fairfax County Government shall:

- Develop a safe, continuous, and interconnected transit system. Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to support a regional network.
- Increase access to alternative modes of transportation, such as bike-share systems, particularly in underserved communities beyond the typical commercial hubs.
- Improve options for safe biking and walking.
- Improve the user experience for bikers, walkers and runners on county trails.
- Encourage alternative transportation options for students, workers and residents. Expand and promote programs that incentivize biking and walking to school or work.
- Increase outreach and education on alternative transportation options by publicizing trail system maps to businesses, schools and the general public, and holding countywide events promoting trail systems.

## **Waste Management and Recycling**

As Fairfax County works to achieve the carbon neutrality goal, it shall consider its direct and indirect emissions associated with the procurement and end-of-life management of resources and materials needed for county operations. As such, Fairfax County Government shall adopt the following waste management and recycling goals:

- Be zero waste by 2030. By June 30, 2021, develop a plan to achieve this zero waste goal.
- Conduct a trash and recycling audit to better understand what is being thrown away and/or recycled.
- Undertake a review of purchasing and develop a sustainable purchasing program to include procurement of recycled content paper and plastics, elimination of single use plastics, and management of electronic waste.

- Encourage composting among county staff.
- Undertake a strong education program in multiple languages about waste and recycling for the general public.

### **Workforce Development**

As the county implements its carbon neutrality, energy, transportation, and waste management and recycling goals, it shall develop youth and adult workforce development objectives to increase learning resources and green career opportunities for students and working professionals. Specifically, Fairfax County Government shall:

- Utilize its buildings as learning tools as sustainable design features are integrated into county facilities. Ensure building occupants have the opportunity to learn about these features through educational tools such as signage, dashboards, and interactive models.
- Share resources and information on the county's green career opportunities with Fairfax County Public Schools as they develop standardized toolkits for students. Ensure green career professionals participate in career and student interview days.
- Support green career programs, both existing and new, to encourage high school students and recent graduates to work in the energy or environmental sector. Share information and resources about these programs with Fairfax County Public Schools.

### **Conclusion**

Implementing the carbon neutrality and focus area recommendations will require updating existing or developing new supportive policies. In addition, these recommendations will require significant funding over the next several years. The Board shall be updated as specific policy updates and funding needs are identified. Progress on implementation shall also be shared with the Board at regular intervals.