

Fairfax County Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) Votes on Sector-Specific Goals & CECAP Report Discussion Meeting Notes

Thursday, May 13th, 2021
Held electronically via WebEx

Fairfax County held a CECAP Working Group Meeting on May 13th from 6:00-8:30pm. The meeting was held electronically via WebEx.

Recordings of the meeting and meeting materials, including the full WebEx chat transcript, [are available online](#).

These meeting notes capture the general activities conducted and discussions that occurred during the meeting. These notes should be viewed in conjunction with the presentation and meeting materials, found at the link above.

Welcome and Overview (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF and Maya Dhavale, FFX)

Legal requirements: A script was read to cover several legal requirements for holding electronic meetings. The script included conducting a roll call identifying all CECAP working group members in attendance and where they were attending from. It was noted that to conduct this meeting electronically, the meeting needs to be clearly audible, publicly accessible, and compelled by emergency circumstances. It was established that this meeting could not be held in person due to the COVID-19 emergency, and that therefore it could instead be held electronically via audio-conferencing. It was also established that this meeting is necessary to move forward the CECAP Working Group's functions.

The meeting purpose was reviewed, focusing on the following goals:

- Discuss and vote on sector-based goal(s).
- Discuss remaining feedback on the Draft of Part I of the CECAP.

Michelle Paul Heelan then reviewed tips for using the WebEx chat function, and Maya Dhavale provided additional context for the meeting and how it fits in with upcoming steps in the CECAP process.

Slides are available here: [CECAP Working Group Meeting - May 13, 2021 | Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

Summary of Previous Meeting's Discussion (Maya Dhavale, Fairfax County)

Maya Dhavale provided an overview of the timeline for developing the CECAP. The schedule for the month of May includes finalizing goals, drafting the CECAP, and conducting public feedback sessions. Maya also reviewed the takeaways from the May 10th meeting, including questions about the CECAP strategies, equity considerations, levels of responsibility, and plan implementation. Maya also directed Working Group members to a transcript of the May 10th chat which is [available online](#).

Maya then briefly reviewed the implementation plan for the CECAP. Currently, the CECAP is in the planning phase. Next steps include presenting the CECAP to the Board of Supervisors, preparing a workplan, developing funding strategies, and adjusting implementation approaches as needed.

Comment: Will Working Group members have the opportunity to comment on Part 2 of the CECAP?

Response: Yes, there will be another set of Working Group meetings in June during which members will have the chance to review and comment on strategies.

Comment: Many of the recommendations involve regulations that are enforced at the County-level – will the CECAP include descriptions of specific regulations and policies (i.e., non-voluntary actions) that the County should enact?

Response: Yes, the “levels of responsibility” concept covers each parties’ capabilities (e.g., individuals, organizations, and the County itself) and will all be included in the CECAP.

Sector-Based Goals Discussion & Verbal Vote (Adam Agalloco and Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Michelle Paul Heelan reviewed the Working Groups’ previous discussion on interim goals. Adam Agalloco then provided a review of the Working Groups’ previous discussion on the need for sector-specific goals, and identified sector goals that were identified as the top priority at Monday’s meeting:

- Goal for Energy Efficiency (commercial and residential)
- Goal for Transportation Sector
- Goal for Natural Resources and Development

He noted several best practices for goal setting, including choosing goals that are specific and measurable. Adam discussed the importance of identifying goals that are specific to the community’s priorities and have metrics that can be easily understood by the public. Finally, he reviewed sector emissions from the 2018 GHG Inventory.

Next, Michelle Paul Heelan facilitated a discussion on potential sector-based goals for building energy efficiency, transportation, and natural resources and

development. See the slides for more detail: [CECAP Working Group Meeting - May 13, 2021 | Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

The verbal discussion is summarized below. The full WebEx chat transcript is [available online](#).

Natural Resource & Development: "50% of new buildings will have a commitment to green building and natural resource preservation and expansion."

Comment: It is important to consider the relationship between building development and transportation networks. How is transit-oriented development represented in this goal?

Response: The "place-based" aspect of development is an important consideration, especially as it relates to equity. This goal does not specifically look at transportation networks, but the two are very closely related.

Comment: I think it may be worthwhile to separate these into two separate goals (one related to green buildings and one related to natural resource preservation). There seems to be a consensus among the Working Group members that this goal should focus on each area more specifically, so separating into two goals makes more sense.

Comment: What is the distinction between "commitment," which requires approval from the Board of Supervisors, and an actual change to the building zoning code?

Response: This is a distinction that would modify the current sector-based goal into an actual strategy. It may be worth considering this for the future, but an actual change to zoning laws would likely be out of the scope of this goal.

The Working Groups came to a consensus to split this goal into two. The first goal, which will focus on green buildings, will be revised to say, "All new, eligible buildings will have a commitment to green building." "Eligible" refers to any building that triggers the green building policy in the Comprehensive Plan. There were multiple comments to define "green buildings," but for now this will be intentionally left vague to capture all options for green building actions.

The second goal will focus specifically on preserving natural resources and tree canopy. This goal will be discussed at a later time.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency: Retrofit or build 100,000 housing units with energy efficiency measures by 2030.

This goal includes single-family homes, apartments, and other housing units. Fairfax County currently has 415,000 housing units, a number that is projected to grow to over 550,000 housing unit by 2050.

Comment: I suggest we change the wording to "Retrofit or build *at least* 100,000 housing units."

Comment: There are two ways to deal with energy benchmarking: comparison against a national standard (e.g., ENERGY STAR) or comparison of EUI before and after retrofits occur within a specific building.

Comment: I believe all new buildings should be built with energy efficiency measures in place, so the goal should focus mainly on retrofitting existing buildings with energy efficiency measures.

The Working Group agreed to remove the word "Build" from this goal, since the previous goal focuses on new buildings. This goal should only focus on retrofitting existing buildings.

Transportation: "Increase transit and non-motorized commuting to 30% (including telework) by 2030."

Currently, Fairfax County is at 14%. Based on other localities, 20% may be a more reasonable target to aim for by 2030. However, the Working Group came to a consensus that the more aggressive target was still worthwhile.

Transportation: "Increase plug-in electric vehicles (PHEVs) and battery electric vehicle (BEVs) to 7.5% of all light-duty vehicle registration by 2030."

Fairfax County currently has 7,400 vehicle that are either PHEV or BEV (0.8% of on-road passenger vehicles). Reaching the goal of 7.5% of all light-duty vehicles being EV in Fairfax County by 2030 would equate to about 66,000 EVs on the road. 7.5% is the target, but it does not mean that more aggressive action can't take place to exceed the goal.

Comment: Encouraging the County vehicle fleet to go electric would bump up the EV percentage significantly.

Comment: There have been recommendations made to the County and school system to adopt EV fleets.

Comment: I don't think that personal EV adoption is a viable climate solution – it's more of a "rich person's solution." We should focus more on micro-mobility and EV adoption for public transit.

Comment: It is probably a lofty goal to try and change the public perception around driving versus mass transit in our car-oriented society. Can we change this goal to a percentage of sales instead of a percentage of registrations?

Response: It could be feasible to pivot to new car sales, but maybe not as ambitious.

Comment: If the goal is to reduce the number of fossil-burning vehicles, perhaps the goal should be to reduce the # of these types of vehicles (either absolute or per capita)? This sort of goal would cover both EV adoption and increases in public transit ridership.

Comment: EV is a prescription for how to get to the goal, not necessarily the goal itself. If the overarching goal is to reduce miles driven in fossil-burning vehicles, maybe this should be framed as part of that effort.

There is a consensus to keep the goal itself, but the group decided to raise the percentage of EVs to 9%.

After coming to a consensus, the Working Group voted verbally on each of the agreed upon sector-level goals:

- All new, eligible buildings will have a commitment to green building.
- Retrofit at least 100,000 housing units with energy efficiency measures by 2030.
- Increase transit and non-motorized commuting to 30% (including telework) by 2030.
- Increase plug-in electric vehicles (PHEVs) and battery electric vehicles (BEVs) to at least 9% of all light-duty vehicle registrations by 2030.

Prepare for Review of Draft CECAP (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Michelle Paul Heelan provided an overview of each section of Part I of the report and facilitated a discussion on the content. Part II of the Draft CECAP will be discussed in the June CECAP Working Group meeting and will include the full suite of strategy sections. Feedback from the Working Group will be incorporated into the second draft of the CECAP. Today's discussion will pick up with Section 6: GHG Reduction Goals and Section 7: Emission Reduction Strategies.

The discussion was focused on the following four questions:

- Does the report accurately reflect the process, the discussions, and the decisions of the Task Force/Working Group?
- Are there any areas that need additional emphasis or explanation?
- Was anything important left out?
- Are there any areas that could be cut or deemphasized?

The verbal discussion is summarized below. The full WebEx chat transcript is [available online](#).

Comment: During the sticky-note exercise, there was no discussion on two important strategies: waste reduction and fugitive gas emissions. Are these going to be included?

Response: The sticky note exercise did include discussion on waste reduction and fugitive gas emissions. Waste reduction is included as a CECAP strategy, but there was not a lot of discussion around it. Fugitive emissions are also an important consideration and will be discussed in the CECAP report, even if they aren't explicitly listed as a strategy.

Comment: The “impact categories” are very vague – some explanation needs to be added around how these subjective judgements were made.

Comment: Discussion of costs should have a higher emphasis – decisions that have a positive impact on GHG emissions and are financially responsible should be prioritized.

Adam explained how the prioritization exercises informed the decision-making around the strategies. The Working Group’s priorities will be mentioned in the report. There was also a discussion around the inclusion of “clean natural gas” in the CECAP.

Discussion on Revised Natural Resources & Development Goal (Adam Agalloco, ICF and Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

The Working Group returned to the conversation around the natural resources goal focused specifically on tree canopy. The proposed goal wording was “Grow Fairfax County’s tree canopy and expand the percent of the population with access to parks.” Due to the time constraints and complexity of this goal, the Working Group members were asked to consider this goal in more detail and provide feedback through email or chat. The project team will iterate on the goal and come up with a proposed wording that captures everyone’s input.

Wrap Up & Next Steps (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Michelle Paul Heelan reviewed meeting objectives and noted that report feedback can be provided until Friday evening. Additionally, Working Group members can continue to provide input on the tree canopy goal (no Friday deadline). She then reviewed upcoming steps in the CECAP process, including finalizing the report in June and presenting the final draft to the Board of Supervisors in July. She also reviewed ways to stay informed, reach out, and stay involved in the CECAP process.