

Local Government Advisory Committee

Public Meeting Summary

Friday, January 13

Attendees

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird, Chair, Lincoln, NE
Mayor Lucy Vinis, Vice-Chair, Eugene, OR
Mayor Ras Baraka, Newark, NJ
Mayor Luke Bronin, Hartford, CT
Mayor Sharon Broome, Baton Rouge, LA
Mr. Gary Brown, Director of Water and Sewerage Department, Detroit, MI
Mayor José Carlos Aponte Dalmau, Carolina, PR
Commissioner Kimberly duBuclet, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Cook County, IL
Ms. Miki Esposito, Department of Public Works, Los Angeles County
Councilmember Sarah Fox, Vancouver, WA
Mayor Jacob Frey, Minneapolis, MN
Councilmember Katherine Gilmore-Richardson, Philadelphia, PA
Mayor Nick Gradisar, Pueblo, CO
Councilmember Jonathan Grieder, Waterloo, IA
Rep. Evan Hansen, West Virginia State Legislature
Commissioner Brenda Howerton, Durham County, NC
Mayor Deana Holiday Ingraham, East Point, GA
Mayor Ella Jones, Ferguson, MO
Councilmember Heather Kimball, Hawai'i County
Commissioner Christine Lowery, Cibola County, NM
Supervisor Ann Mallek, Albemarle County, VA
Senator Rachel May, New York State Legislature
County Attorney Christian Menefee, Harris County, TX
Mayor Douglas Nicholls, Yuma, AZ
Mayor Ron Nirenberg, San Antonio, TX
Mayor Neil O'Leary, Waterbury, CT
Commissioner David Painter, Clermont County, OH
Mayor Mary Lou Pauly, Issaquah, WA
Mr. Whitford Remer, Sustainability and Resilience Officer, Tampa, FL
The Honorable Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor, Madison, WI
Mr. Michael Scuse, Secretary of Agriculture, Delaware Department of Agriculture, Dover, DE
Mr. Jeff Witte, Secretary, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, NM
Ms. Lisa Wong, Town Manager, Winchester, MA

Summary

11:30am **Call to Order LGAC Meeting**

Paige Lieberman, LGAC Designated Federal Officer, called the meeting to order.

Welcoming Remarks

John Lucey, Deputy Associate Administrator for Intergovernmental Relations, welcomed everyone to the meeting, including 15 new members. He noted that EPA solicited new members in the fall and received more than 80 impressive applications. This year's Committee will have 34 members, including an even

split of male and female members, 14 people of color, and representation from 29 different states and U.S. territories. New members were also appointed to the LGAC's Small Communities Advisory Subcommittee, which provides a voice for small communities and their unique needs. We are appointing 12 new members and 5 returning members. In total, the SCAS will have 23 members, including 9 women, 10 people of color, and representation from 21 states and territories.

Lucey highlighted an announcement from this week regarding the availability of \$100 million for projects that advance environmental justice in underserved and overburdened communities across the country. This funding is made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act and marks the largest amount of EJ grant funding ever offered by the agency. At the same time, EPA released a set of legal tools designed to help communities identify and address cumulative impacts through a range of actions, including permitting, regulations, and grants. These actions are just the start of how President Biden is demonstrating his commitment to environmental justice. We hope these tools will be valuable at the local level. Lucey underscored the importance of receiving input from local governments in general, and this group in particular.

11:40am **Opening Remarks**

Mayor Gaylor Baird welcomed participants. She highlighted all the work of the past year, providing input on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, managing PFAS, integrating environmental justice into the Agency's work, supporting the water workforce, and updating the Lead and Copper Rule. She thanked EPA for all the time and energy given to engaging with local governments on all these topics, including the current Inflation Reduction Act discussions, and offered the LGAC as a long-term sounding board as EPA develops and refine the IRA programs. She also acknowledged the work of Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway and her leadership of the Air and Climate Workgroup. The volume of recommendations that the workgroup has created, and the depth of each recommendation, is truly impressive.

Roll Call

Paige Lieberman completed roll call of members and established a quorum.

11:50am **Presentation of Recommendations: Climate Pollution Reduction Grants and Heavy-Duty Vehicles Program,**

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway provided an overview of the Committee's final draft recommendations on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants and Heavy-Duty Programs. Above all, the LGAC recommends that EPA provide funding directly to local and tribal governments, rather than going through the states. Where this is not possible, they recommend requiring grant recipients to partner with relevant jurisdictions when identifying, designing, and implementing projects in recipients' communities.

Specific to the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, the LGAC recommends EPA prioritize projects that:

- contribute to emissions reduction in the transportation sector, particularly those that encourage mode shift or that have health co-benefits for disadvantaged communities
- support decarbonization of buildings, particularly new and existing income-qualified housing projects

- create green infrastructure and other natural climate solutions, including expansion/restoration of urban tree canopy
- support the development and adoption of lower-emission and zero-emission on-farm machinery and equipment
- re-orient existing projects toward GHG reduction
- prioritize specific projects or actions for implementation, as well as specific goals and metrics, to promote action-oriented funding

We were also asked to provide recommendations regarding technical assistance, which include:

- using existing or new technical assistance centers to deploy support services to local governments and community groups, with the goal of helping communities identify their overarching climate goals, the various components of realizing that program, and the funding streams to support it
- creating planning templates and other resources to support communities in quickly creating prioritized, actionable plans with useable metrics (e.g. calculators, case studies, and templates that highlight how GHG reduction and other co-benefits can be achieved in common municipal projects)
- investing early in hiring staff to manage and coordinate program activities, targeting full program staff by July 2023
- developing communication strategies, tools, and templates for communities to use, and have EPA staff available to answer questions and tailor strategies to specific locations
- providing better and more streamlined access to available resources, noting that EPA has the expertise, but local governments don't know how to access it effectively

Another important part of IRA implementation from our perspective is the need to coordinate the various governments involved. To that end, we recommend that EPA:

- fund local governments directly wherever possible, and require any states receiving funding to demonstrate how local and tribal governments within their jurisdiction have been engaged in the planning of the projects, and how they will be integrated into the implementation
- create an Interagency Office with US DOT, US DOE, US HUD, and US Commerce (EDA) with the goals of coordinating on cross-cutting issues and developing an intuitive way for local governments to stack funding for a specific goal
- view any state planning grants as an opportunity to create alignment and coordination across state agencies and with units of local governments, tribes, community groups, and private business to increase the efficacy of the implementation grants, as well as other funding available via the IIJA/BIL and IRA

For the Heavy-Duty Vehicle program, the biggest contribution the federal government could make towards transitioning fleets to clean vehicles would be to rapidly and comprehensively transition its own fleet. This would send a clear signal to the market, backed by federal purchasing power, that could help move manufacturers, spur innovation, and bring prices down.

Another seismic opportunity would be to develop a single, simple application that covers all programs related to transitioning away from heavy-duty vehicles. This would allow applicants to focus on the big picture goals, rather than spending limited resources and staff time completing applications.

Additionally, the LGAC recommends that EPA:

- prioritize replacing vehicles that are used more within a community (thus generating more emissions) over those that are less frequently used, and prioritize vehicles that are more often used in low-income communities
- design this program to account for asset management cycles and provide a long time frame for expending grant funds so that communities on long replacement cycles can still benefit
- identify financing options for communities that are unable to budget for the base cost of the vehicle
- dedicate staff and other resources to encourage state utility regulators and utilities to adopt rate structures that support EV charging

12:00pm **Discussion and Voting on Recommendations**

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway facilitated a discussion of the recommendations.

Mayor Vinis highlighted that despite major differences across the country in many ways, the LGAC did find many themes that cross all communities.

Jonathan Gordon highlighted the need to integrate EJ, knowing that many communities haven't had the chance to use these programs in the past. He also highlighted the need for flexibility with grants and technical assistance to support.

Mayor Nicholls highlighted the value of providing direct allocation to local governments, a simplified application for grants, and the need to consider limitations in smaller rural communities for supporting alternative fueling infrastructure. As an example, he noted that Yuma is the biggest community for 180 miles, and grants and programs may need to be tailored to ensure they support rural areas, particularly in the West where communities are often very far apart.

Commissioner Painter said that a recent NaCo meeting featured a company that makes electric school buses working with municipalities on affordability.

Councilmember Kimball echoed support of funding local governments directly and noted how critical it is to have additional technical assistance provided after funding is received. She asked if the group discussed using technology other than electrification, noting other alternatives in some regions, and highlighted the importance of thinking about battery disposal long-term.

Members voted unanimously to approve the recommendations.

12:20pm Public Comment

Mayor Lucy Vinis opened the meeting to the public for comment.

Steve Via from the American Water Works Association shared a presentation on the Sanitary Survey Program for drinking water utilities. He highlighted concerns that adding cybersecurity to this program is impractical and won't meaningfully improve system resiliency.

Gil Grodzinsky, from Georgia's Environmental Department, highlighted the [U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization](#), which several federal agencies (DOE, DOT, EPA, HUD) created to tackle decarbonization.

12:25pm Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird thanked members for their time and thoughtful recommendations and thanked the members of the public who joined the meeting.

12:30pm Meeting Closed

Paige Lieberman closed the meeting.