

# ACSI

## MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

Chair Mary Peveto | Vice Chair Bradford McKeown

November 30, 2016

Dear Chair Kafoury and Commissioners:

The Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI) is honored to support the Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners (Board) and Office of Sustainability mission to work with County Departments and the community to promote programs and policies that lead to a more equitable, prosperous, and environmentally sound Multnomah County.

In the past year the County has taken action on many unique challenges, including local air quality crises, homelessness and affordable housing, and furthering its commitment to climate goals. The County has an unprecedented opportunity to continue its innovative work and local and national leadership in these areas while also addressing disparities in our communities. While we have a lot to be proud of as Oregonians, we are not immune to the larger social justice and climate challenges that face our country and which threaten to undermine the health and well-being of Multnomah County residents. ACSI believes the following recommendations identify notable and impactful opportunities for the 2017 calendar year.

#### RECOMMENDATION I – 2017 County State Legislative Agenda

1. Work with state legislators to develop **comprehensive diesel legislation** that enacts clean diesel engine standards in Oregon. High concentrations of industrial metals discovered in Portland neighborhood moss put our community on high alert for the risk due to air toxics. But it still remains that the risk posed by diesel particulate matter (PM) is of a magnitude of scale 100-800 times what was discovered in subsequent air monitoring of metals hot spots. While every county resident breathes air which puts them at elevated risk of cancer, poor communities and communities of color continue to bear disproportionately negative impacts. It is essential that Oregon use this unique mandate to pass long overdue statewide diesel standards.
2. Work with state legislators to **ensure Volkswagen settlement dollars go to maximize human health benefits in Oregon**. Multnomah County residents are exposed to the highest levels of NOx and diesel emissions in the state. At the same time, County residents were also a large portion of the consumers who were victims of VW's fraud. Settlement dollars should be dispersed taking into account where effected vehicles were bought and used, where the greatest impact from NOx and diesel PM is present, and with a focus on the most vulnerable, like children and people of color. These goals will complement and leverage the County's work to reduce the significant burden of diesel emissions in our communities by implementing a Clean Diesel Contracting Policy and providing financial support for clean school buses for our kids.
3. **Defend current statutes that allow local authority over protecting public health** from air toxics. ACSI supports the County leadership's call for the state to take decisive action on air quality and its representation on the Cleaner Air Oregon rules advisory committee. However, the County should preserve its options to best protect public health if State regulatory efforts fall short, such as working with other governments through a local air authority.



#### Advisory Committee Members

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4. Support State legislation that places an **impactful price on carbon emissions** and prioritizes the needs of environmental justice communities<sup>1</sup>.
5. Support a **State transportation funding package** that meets the Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals and encourages environmental justice, health, and active transportation benefits.
6. Strengthen **state energy/building codes** to meet the CAP's goal for all new residential and commercial buildings to be built to net zero ready standards by 2030.

#### **RECOMMENDATION II – County and Regional Policy**

1. Fund an **“Outcome Broker” position** to implement the Green and Healthy Homes model in order to increase the number of households served with coordinated County and City services, such as with weatherization, lead abatement, and critical home repair. This initiative would also make the programs more user-friendly and align resource use and deployment.
2. Continue to support **standards for affordable housing that prioritize durability, health, and efficiency**, and that are cost-effective when evaluated over the life cycle of the building.
3. **Expand woodsmoke inventory and risk assessment to include commercial food businesses** – in addition to current residential wood burning heating. Wood smoke pollution disproportionately impacts Latino families and threatens to push the County out of compliance with the Federal Clean Air Act; curtailment studies and strategies should encompass all sources.

#### **RECOMMENDATION III – Environmental Justice Resolution**

ACSI recommends that the Board adopt a resolution describing the imperative for County, regional and state climate policies and programs to be accountable and responsive to the principles of environmental justice; and direct key offices to develop a specific environmental justice framework associated with its climate, energy, and transportation agenda. This resolution would advance the County's mission to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and its approach to sustainability, based on achieving social, economic, and environmental justice. This resolution would provide timely guidance for the County's efforts on air quality and health issues, homelessness and affordable housing issues, and in implementing and complying with the CAP. ACSI is prepared to work with the Board, Office of Sustainability, and other County Departments to formulate a resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to advise the County on these issues. These State legislative and County-specific recommendations support clean air, climate action, and healthy, safe, and long-term affordable housing. With 81 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the County originating from residential and commercial buildings and transportation, these recommendations will make great strides in meeting the County's CAP goals and, particularly if advanced within a framework of equity and environmental justice, do so without disregarding or endangering the wellbeing of vulnerable populations within our communities.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Board and County Staff on implementing these priorities and continuing to provide timely input to the Board and Office of Sustainability.

Sincerely,

Your 2016 ACSI Members

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<sup>1</sup> "Environmental justice communities" include minority and low income communities, tribal communities, and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes.