

TRANSPORTATION & THE ENVIRONMENT PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee on Transportation & the Environment will hold a Public Hearing on the following Legislation:

B22-904, the Clean Energy DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018

Tuesday, 10/9/2018, 11:00am, Room 500, Wilson Building

I am David Schwartzman, representing the DC Statehood Green Party and myself as candidate for Council At-Large. I am a climate scientist, a climate and energy justice activist and participant in Sustainable DC 1.0 and 2.0 (Transportation Working Group). We strongly support passage of this bill, moving our electricity supplies to 100% renewable by 2032. Thank you Councilmember Mary Cheh and your staff for this truly visionary legislation.

I note that in June 2017, our Mayor joined more than 250 US Mayors in making a commitment to 100% Renewable Energy by 2035. Yet, Sustainable DC is still stuck at the all too weak goal of 50% Renewable Energy and 50% Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 2032. The latest IPCC call for no more than 1.5 deg C global warming reinforces the need for more rapid reductions in GHG emissions (1), as our Chairperson Mary Cheh so well outlined in her introductory remarks. We should of course recognize that DC is now a leader in the transition to renewable energy, but much more needs to be done, especially to make environmental justice a reality. Sustainability requires equity. We cannot claim to be a sustainable city without eliminating poverty especially for children. In addition to supporting Mark Rodeffer's (DC Sierra Club) in testimony made here, recommending exclusion of hydropower and nuclear power from the Renewable Energy portfolio, I support Basav Sen's (Institute for Policy Studies, "IPS") written testimony regarding the unwelcome inclusion of biomass in Tier 1 renewable sources, likewise his point that a critical need is addressed by the proposed set-aside of 20% or more of the increased revenues for the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund for bill assistance and energy efficiency programs for low-income residents. Further, DC's policies regarding energy efficiency should be guided by the excellent IPS report, "Energy Efficiency with Justice" (Sen et al., 2018).

I will now focus my testimony on the following: moving to zero emissions from the transportation sector even faster and curbing methane emissions leaking from our underground natural gas pipelines. I submit that DC could be more aggressive in curbing carbon emissions from transportation than what is proposed in the transportation section of this bill. A rapid shift to electrified public transportation must be implemented. A bottom-up planned congestion charge in downtown DC with revenues transferred to public transit, making it cheaper and more convenient, should be considered in the near future. In 2014, MoveDC did a study on congestion pricing in downtown DC (2). This would be consistent with the Home Rule Charter since it would not single out non-residents, unlike toll collection on bridges for commuters coming into DC.

A recent article in City Paper highlighted the leakage of natural gas into the air in Georgetown (3). This article mentions a peer-reviewed paper by Jackson et al. (2014) which found 6,000 natural gas leaks across DC (4). Besides the obvious fire and explosion hazard, this is a serious source of GHG emissions which must be curbed.

Natural gas (methane) is not the bridge fossil fuel to renewables since its greenhouse gas footprint is even greater than coal, not from its combustion but rather from leakage into the atmosphere. Natural gas is a climate killer. DC should plan a phase out of natural gas use in favor of solar-generated electricity for cooking and home heating, employing high efficiency heat pumps, with the goal of 100% reduction in GHG emissions by 2032 at the latest.

Finally, establishing a DC Public Bank as a critically important complement to the Green “Bank” facility, receiving DC revenue instead of Wall Street (starting with Wells Fargo and Bank of America) will help to advance to the goals of this bill, so will municipalization of our utilities in the form of DC Public Power.

(1) <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-45653099>. IPCC: Climate scientists consider 'life changing' report, Matt McGrath, October 1, 2018.

(2) <https://gizmodo.com/its-time-to-embrace-congestion-pricing-1585582662>.

(3) Neighbors Fuming, by Morgan Baskin, City Paper, September 28, 2018, p.5.

(4) Jackson, R.B. et al. (2014) Natural Gas Pipeline Leaks Across Washington, DC. Environ. Sci. Technol. 48, 2051– 2058.

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