

November 29, 2018

Charlotte City Council  
600 East 4th Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202

Dear Council Members and Staff,

On behalf of Sustain Charlotte, I want to thank you for approving the creation of a Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP). We remain strong supporters of the City's goals as laid out in the Sustainable and Resilient Charlotte by 2050 Resolution.

In the months since the resolution was adopted, our staff have invested considerable time working with the City to provide input on the SEAP. In partnership with other community stakeholder organizations with relevant subject matter expertise, we submitted a joint letter to you in early November with our collective thoughts on the SEAP draft.

In addition, we would like to reinforce our support for several key provisions in the SEAP and how the City's land use and transportation policies and decisions will greatly impact our ability to become a low carbon city:

#### ACTION AREA 8: FACILITATE RAPID UPTAKE OF SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

In order to reduce emissions from the transportation sector there needs to be focused efforts:

- To change how people move about,
- For improving efficiency in vehicles (whether technological or behavioral),
- To change the fuels that are being used by the vehicles,
- For making the last mile of a person's journey zero carbon,
- For providing the new infrastructure required to support alternative means of transportation, reducing the need for transportation,
- For changing the existing transportation infrastructure to support a range of transportation choices.

#### Task 4: Increase Access to Zero Carbon Mobility Options

Getting people out of automobiles requires providing them with alternative transportation options, making areas more walkable or providing an alternative that removes the transportation requirement.

We would like to see a step in this section specifically referencing the need for the city to allocate more of its resources for multimodal transportation facilities that encourage driving less and increase user safety. We appreciate the references to other city strategies like Charlotte Bikes, Charlotte Walks, and the 2040 Transportation Action Plan, but believe the SEAP should more explicitly outline the need to fund and expand these plans. These plans identify ways to make it safer to walk and cycle around the city, which has a positive effect on reducing carbon emissions by reducing automobile trips.

The city must seek private and public funding to dramatically expand transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure. This will be critical to providing low-carbon, safe, and affordable transportation options for the 30% of Charlotteans who do not own a car and those who prefer these modes over driving. The city must actively encourage and incentivize these inherently zero and low carbon modes of travel.

We appreciate the support for electric vehicles, but want the SEAP to more strongly push for biking and walking as viable forms of transportation as well. To this end, we also want to make sure these sustainable forms of transportation are not primarily seen as simply a solution for the first and last mile but are considered and supported throughout.

**Road transport is the largest source of CO<sub>2</sub>e and GHG emissions in Charlotte. The SEAP acknowledges that to meet the goals of the original Resolution, a comprehensive approach that works to fundamentally change local land use and the existing transportation infrastructure of Charlotte will be required.**

Specifically, we would like to highlight our support, as we transition to carbon free mobility, for the following strategies: more dense, transit-oriented development; compact land use; improved efficiency and zero emission vehicles; zero carbon first and last mile of trips; broad range of affordable and equitable transportation options; and the reduction of auto dependency via a robust public policy menu of incentives and disincentives. Achieving these goals will require dramatic changes to the transportation system in ways that will benefit all users.

Task 5: Continue to integrate Transport Orientated Development (TOD) policies into land use policy frameworks, namely the Comprehensive Plan and UDO update TOD encourages the development of systems that decrease reliance on the automobile. Integrating such policies has long term implications for a downward pressure on transportation. The Comprehensive Plan will have far reaching implications for direct and indirect energy requirements and this should be part of it

The SEAP does a good job of connecting the dots between buildings and transportation. We strongly agree that “construction that occurs without thought to multi-modal transportation is a barrier to future change.”

Charlotte is currently going through the process of developing a Comprehensive Plan that would then inform the regulations laid out in an updated Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). These documents will provide a regulatory mechanism that provides a vision and regulates public policies not related to building codes, such as transportation, land use, and housing, among other areas. A key part of updating these two critical land use documents is to drive greater urban density, address issues of walkability, and improve the quality of life for the residents of Charlotte which help reduce overall energy consumption.

We support the various plans that the City has developed to facilitate the use of alternative modes of transit and support the need for higher standards in our Transit Oriented Development (TOD) ordinance that prioritize moving and housing people over moving and housing cars. The intent is to create livable communities where people can get to the office, grocery store, restaurants, libraries, and parks without requiring the use of a car. The TOD approach makes provisions for providing extensive pedestrian systems throughout neighborhoods to minimize walking distance for residents. The approach makes provision for buffering cyclists from

automobile activity with few conflict points.

We believe in standards for mixed-use development that include the need for transportation networks that provide a variety of travel choices. These mixed-use centers should include key retail and service outlets in one location to reduce transport requirements and increase livability.

We believe urban density presents opportunities to create a greener way to live by creating the possibility for a better quality of life and a lower carbon footprint through more efficient infrastructure and planning. This affords significant opportunities for efficiency improvements through promoting public transport opportunities and accelerating the transition to electric vehicles.

In closing, we reiterate our appreciation for your work to move Charlotte decisively to a sustainable energy future and to reduce Charlotte's greenhouse gas emissions. We hope you will incorporate our feedback into planning and implementation associated with this effort.

Sincerely,



Shannon Binns  
Executive Director, Sustain Charlotte