



Chair
Austin Nunez
Tel. 520-349-9500
anunez@waknet.org

Designated Federal Officer
Oscar Carrillo
Tel. 202-564-2294
carrillo.oscar@epa.gov

U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee
*Independent Federal Advisors on the
North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation*

January 19, 2024

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Austin Nunez
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The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

The U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) to the U.S. Representative to the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation held its 60th meeting on December 7, 2023, in Washington, DC. This letter represents our advice resulting from that meeting. The main objective of our meeting was to provide advice to the EPA Administrator on exemplary cities in North America with strong climate governance, nature-based solutions, environmental justice engagement and promotion of Indigenous engagement and leadership.

Our meeting included presentations on: 1) U.S. Priorities from Mark Kasman, on behalf of Jane Nishida, Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office for International and Tribal Affairs (OITA), 2) CEC Updates, from Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in Montreal, Canada, 3) JPAC Report-out from Octaviana Trujillo, Chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), and 4) Innovative Solutions in Climate Champion Cities in US and North America, from Kate Johnson, Head of U.S. Federal Affairs, C40 Cities, and David Miller, (former Mayor of Toronto), Managing Director, C40 Centre for City Climate Policy and Economy.

The meeting was opened with remarks from Federal Advisory Committee Management and Oversight Division (FACMOD) Director Robbie Young-Mackall, who provided an overview of FACMOD activities and responsibilities. The GAC appreciates the dedicated support provided by the FACMOD and thanks Director Young-Mackall, Oscar Carrillo our Designated Federal Officer, and all the FACMOD staff for their support in ensuring our meeting was a success. We hope our advice is useful to you in your work with the CEC, and wish you continued success.

Sincerely,

Austin Nunez, Chair
Governmental Advisory Committee

cc:

Jane Nishida, Assistant Administrator, Office of International & Tribal Affairs (OITA), EPA
Rafael DeLeon, Deputy Assistant Administrator, OITA, EPA
Robbie Young-Mackall, Director, FACMOD, EPA
Martin Kenneth, Director, American Indian Environmental Office, EPA
Surabhi Shah, Office of the Administrator, EPA
Mark Kasman, Director, Office of Regional & Bilateral Affairs, OITA, EPA
Monisha Harris, Deputy Director, Office of Regional & Bilateral Affairs, OITA, EPA
Lesley D'Anglada, General Standing Committee (OITA), EPA
Oscar Carrillo, GAC/NAC Designated Federal Officer, EPA
Octaviana Trujillo, Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Jorge Daniel Taillant, Executive Director, CEC
Members of the U.S. National and Governmental Advisory Committees

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Federal Advisory Committee Management & Oversight Division, OMS
Mail Code 1601-M, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20460 (t)
202-564-2294

Governmental Advisory Committee
(GAC) to the U.S. Representative to the
Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)

The December 7th, 2023 meeting of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) resulted in advice that responds to the priorities of the EPA via the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). The GAC discussed four specific charge questions and, based on the discussion offers the following advice.

I. **Advice 2024 – 01 (January 19, 2024) Exemplary North American cities**

The GAC recommends for EPA to consider the following North American cities that exemplify important characteristics of successful climate adaption practices.

1. Climate governance that advances urban climate adaptation.

- Nashville, Tennessee, developed local building codes requirements that are designed to address climate change for their infrastructure, funds have been set aside for businesses to apply for, to combat greenhouse gas emissions.
- San Francisco, California, is developing climate initiatives focused on sea level changes and storm events as an outcome of their involvement with the Resilient Cities Network and Urban Sustainability Directors Network.
- Miami-Dade County, Florida, is engaged with the Urban Sustainability Directors Network and has become a leader on climate actions. The county plans to cut community wide greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030, and to retrofit existing buildings to reduce energy consumption, expand renewable energy generation, and build ultra-low energy buildings.
- The City of El Paso, Texas, developed a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan that seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change impacts through several programs they have developed and includes the following goals: Sustainable and adaptive city infrastructure systems, both public and private. Creation of innovative pathways toward economic prosperity for all El Pasoans. Empowering El Pasoans to move their community forward and strengthen their city.
- The City of Houston, Texas, has a Climate Adaptation Plan they consider to be a living document – regularly measured, verified, and updated – providing an opportunity for continual feedback as to how Houston can best achieve a carbon

neutral future. Houston's plan is organized into four focus areas: Transportation, Energy Transition, Building Optimization, and Materials Management.

- The City of Austin, Texas, is implementing its Climate Equity Plan with a goal of net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

2. Employment of nature-based evolutions that increase community resilience

- Portland, Oregon, has purchased lands to increase green spaces, some of the lands contain creeks and rivers, this in turn promotes conservation of green spaces in the surrounding area.
- Mexico City, Mexico, developed a program that brings green and blues spaces into their city, thereby assisting in cooling the temperature of the city at those locations.
- El Paso, Texas, is recommended as an exemplary city due to investing in methods to conserve water resources. They have also received a Phase I Climate Pollution Reduction Grant from the Texas Council on Environmental Quality and is actively developing its climate adaptation plan.

3. Environmental justice solutions and community engagement process

- Providence, Rhode Island, has implemented a Climate Justice Plan: Creating an Equitable, Low-Carbon, and Climate Resilient Future, that includes, becoming carbon neutral by 2050, with frontline communities to "lead the charge." The Plan's development includes an agreed upon community-centered process to ensure the climate plan supports frontline communities and leads with equity. A couple of the Plan's Adaptation Strategies include a) prioritizing tree plantings in low-canopy areas where heat island index is high, and residents can experience the cooling (electrical savings), air pollution, and water filtration benefits; and b) Establish Green Justice Zones in Frontline Communities that use a collaborative governance model to achieve health equity, improve quality of life, and climate resilience in frontline communities.

II. Advice 2024 – 02 (January 19, 2024) Considerations in selecting cities

The examples above are by no means comprehensive. Many cities are doing relevant work at varying scales. For example, the Arizona Office of Resiliency is developing a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) to support state, territory, tribal and local actions to reduce

greenhouse gases and toxic air pollution. The next round of CPRG applications is due in April 2024 and these will provide new examples of municipal climate action plans from across the country.

The Committee noted that initiatives focused on urban areas can limit the inclusion of tribes. For example, Blackfeet Nation has had a climate change adaptation plan since 2018. EPA should consider creating categories of different types of communities, recognizing that smaller cities might have implemented innovative solutions because they benefit from more flexible and streamlined decision-making, and strategies may scale up to the benefit of bigger cities.

III. Advice 2024-3 (January 19, 2024) Existing Funding and Partnership Development

In this work, to establish partnerships among North American cities, EPA should consider the work of the U.S. Climate Alliance, The Resilient Cities Network and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. The work of these groups can be used to understand best practices for pairing cities, offering funding and sharing resources.

As a way to encourage collaboration, the GAC recommends EPA develop this partnership program with an understanding of how competitive the funding environment is for cities that have fewer resources and cities with populations that lack the political will to address climate change. The committee recommends that in general cities be paired based on their population size, political structures, and location, however as noted above, smaller and larger cities may benefit from collaboration if they share other characteristics.