

Local Government Advisory Committee Public Meeting Summary

Friday, November 18

Paige Lieberman, LGAC Designated Federal Officer, opened the meeting, which occurred via Zoom.

John Lucey, Deputy Associate Administrator of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, welcomed LGAC members, and thanked them for their attention to the two issues on the agenda.

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird, LGAC Chair, also provided opening remarks, and took roll call to establish a quorum.

2:20pm Presentation of Recommendations: Small Communities Advisory Subcommittee

Commissioner Christine Lowery, SCAS Chair

Commissioner Lowery provided an overview of barriers and recommendations developed by the SCAS, to help small communities access Bipartisan Infrastructure Law investments.

- **Lack of Capacity to Find Funding Opportunities**
 - Commissioner Lowery noted that it takes 80 to 200 hours to assess and apply for a federal grant, but small governments have limited time and expertise. Additionally, small communities have a limited awareness in how to receive federal assistance/grants. Despite hundreds of Federal Register notices and list serves from federal agencies, the message is not getting through to its intended audience.
 - Recommendation #1: The SCAS recommends that EPA Regional Offices work closely with state, county, and town officials. Each state has municipal leagues with periodic meetings of elected officials, and each county has planning commissions with individuals looking for ways to grow their communities. EPA should coordinate with their regional offices to attend these meetings and talk to community leaders about what is available, how to navigate the process, and what resources are available for follow-up.

- **Lack of Capacity to Manage Grants**
 - Recommendation #1: Simplify the grant application and management process in any way possible.
 - Recommendation #2: Provide administrative relief waivers for communities under a certain size, knowing that capacity is limited.
 - Recommendation #3: Ensure that all EPA grants allow for a certain percentage of funding be set aside for administration.

- **Project Planning and Costs**
 - Across the board, projects that are federally funded become much more expensive overtime due to unforeseen circumstances.
 - Recommendation #1: Allow smaller communities to apply first and receive federal funding and subsequently allow communities to submit a 5–6-year plan to complete the work and spread the expenses out over time.

2:30pm Discussion and Voting on Recommendations

Facilitated by Commissioner Christine Lowery, SCAS Chair

Commissioner Lowery facilitated a brief discussion of the recommendations. LGAC members voted unanimously to approve the recommendations.

2:40pm **Review of New Charge: Inflation Reduction Act**
Paige Lieberman, LGAC Designated Federal Officer

Paige Lieberman provided an overview of a new charge being addressed by the Air and Climate Workgroup on the Inflation Reduction Act. The charge is divided into three parts. First is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, specifically the \$7 billion allocated for competitive grants to States, municipalities, tribal governments, and eligible recipients, to enable low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy or benefit from zero-emission technologies, and to carry out other greenhouse gas emission reduction activities.

Part two is the Climate Adaptation Implementation Grants, and part three is transportation programming. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund includes a statutory deadline of 180 days after the bill's passage, which means February. For that reason, input on this part of the charge is requested by December 16. For part two and three, there is a deadline of January 16.

Lieberman noted that because the charge includes environmental justice topics, the Climate and Environmental Justice Workgroups have been temporarily merged to provide a quick response.

Presentation of Inflation Reduction Act Information
Zealan Hoover, EPA Senior Advisor

Zealan Hoover provided an overview of the EPA's programs under the Inflation Reduction Act, particularly the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GHGRF). Highlights included:

- IRA authorizes \$27B GHGRF program that will allow EPA to capitalize nonprofit institutions for decarbonization activities
- OAR will coordinate \$5B for state, local, and tribal governments towards climate planning grants
- Additional funding will focus on decarbonizing ports and air monitoring programs
- \$3B will go to EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and Civil Rights as block grants for community-based organizations
- Smaller set of IRA investments will go to EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention for enforcement
- Significant portion of funding has eligibility for local governments and tribes to apply. Larger percentage of dollars will float through states, but there is more flexibility to partner with states and local governments in comparison to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

2:55pm **Discussion of Recommendations**
Facilitated by Mayor Deana Holiday Ingraham, Environmental Justice Workgroup Chair

Mayor Ingraham facilitated a discussion of the recommendations so far.

Commissioner Lowery said that rural communities are affected by aging highways and noted the effectiveness of the Diesel Reduction Act. Are we looking at foundations established by transportation? We do not have enough research on diesel and the impacts on elderly or pregnant women.

Zealan Hoover noted that the IRA provides DERA program with \$60M for base program and will be able to increase the size of the program.

Jonathan Gordon shared experience from the City of Newark's purchase of electric trucks. To accept state's \$4 million in funding would cost the city \$5 million. The problem is incremental costs, and the inability for many communities to purchase new trucks unless fully funded. Instead, Newark's residents need incentives for personal

bikes and scooters; 60 percent of our residents do not own a vehicle, and many are spending \$50/week renting scooters and e-bikes. Finally, he noted that many of the manufactures of EV Sanitation Trucks were designed for the California market, which operates with two person's crews and utilizes side loading canisters. These models present a major safety concern for urban sanitation operations, which utilize rear loading bodies and need crew cabs. Of the six major EV sanitation truck manufactures, only one produces a crew cab.

Zealan Hoover said that diesel remission has a requirement that older equipment be replaced. Programs have discretion on how to set reimbursement rate. Districts can receive full cost reimbursement if they are located in low income/tribal communities.

In response to other questions, Zealan Hoover noted that GHGRF recipients must be non-depository banks (other than from repayments and other revenue from using these grant funds), so that excludes CDFIs. Recipients must be 1) nonprofits that provide capital, including by leveraging private capital; 2) funded by public or charitable contributions; 3) invests in or finances projects alone or with investors. He continued, saying there are many opportunities to partner with other nonprofits and local governments, and EPA is working to figure out the structure to have the broadest reach. In terms of administrative funding, Congress gave EPA \$30 million to implement the program over 10 years, which means about 30 employees to manage distribution of funding.

3:15pm **Presentation of Recommendations: America's Waters and Infrastructure Workgroup**
Gary Brown, America's Waters and Infrastructure Workgroup Vice-Chair

Gary Brown provided an overview of the Committee's recommendations regarding water workforce. The recommendations include:

- Work with EPA's Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education and other industry-related associations to develop curriculum and toolkits that state, local, tribal, and territorial governments can use to engage youth and teens.
- Include a focus on education and marketing for new grant funding opportunities, including funding for water system employees to speak in schools about career opportunities.
- Work with industry-related associations to develop a peer-to-peer network that connects communities doing innovative things in workforce development with communities needing support.
- Increase support for programs that provide job-related training to students and returning citizens through apprenticeships, bootcamps, and partnerships between water utilities and higher education institutions.
- Increase support for re-training workers who have been laid off in industries that have transferrable skills to water and wastewater jobs.
- Explore ways to add STEM and water workforce to programs like AmeriCorps and VISTA, so that utilities can hire program participants.
- Fund a study that forecasts the future needs of the water workforce, including automated tasks and using wastewater surveillance for public health management.
- The LGAC re-emphasizes its [July 2022 recommendation](#) that EPA Regional Offices develop meaningful partnerships with municipal leagues and similar organizations in every state that effectively build awareness of EPA's resources within local governments.

3:20pm **Discussion and Voting on Recommendations**
Facilitated by Gary Brown, America's Waters and Infrastructure Workgroup Vice-Chair
EPA Office of Water Speaker

Andrew Sawyers and Jennifer McLain thanked the LGAC members for their input and said that this input will be incorporated into an upcoming RFA.

Ann Mallek recommended that EPA encourage linkage with state and federal workforce organizations, using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act dollars to train young and transitioning workers.

3:35pm **Review of New Charge: Lead and Copper Rule**
Paige Lieberman, LGAC Designated Federal Officer

Paige Lieberman provided an overview of a new charge for the America's Waters and Infrastructure Workgroup. The charge comes from EPA's Office of Water and covers the proposed Lead and Copper Rule Improvements. EPA has identified opportunities to improve the law, including proactive and equitable lead service line replacement (LSLR), strengthening compliance tap sampling to better identify communities most at risk of lead in drinking water and to compel lead reduction actions, and reducing the complexity of the regulation through improvement of the action and trigger level construct.

Lieberman shared that the America's Water and Infrastructure Workgroup has already had one discussion on this topic and will have one more on December 6. Then, we will hear a presentation of recommendations on December 16 and have a chance for the full membership to discuss at that time before it's submitted to EPA's Administrator.

3:40pm **Public Comment**
Facilitated by Lisa Wong, LGAC Vice-Chair

There were no public comments

3:50pm **Closing Remarks and Next Steps**
Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird, LGAC Chair

Mayor Gaylor Baird thanked everyone for their time and comments.

4:00pm **Meeting Closed**
Paige Lieberman, Designated Federal Officer

Paige Lieberman closed the meeting.
