

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

TO: Chair Eric Costello, Ways and Means Committee, Baltimore City Council

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support Council Bill 21-0159 – Procurement – Zero-Emissions Vehicles

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports Council Bill 21-0159 offered by Councilman Conway. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

The transportation sector is the largest contributor to climate change in our country, our region, and in Maryland. It accounts for approximately 40% of greenhouse gas emissions statewide, predominately from on-road sources. Gas-powered vehicles also emit air pollutants like particulate matter that harm pulmonary and cardiovascular health. Of the particulate matter that diesel-powered vehicles emit, 80%-95% is ‘ultrafine’ size, which has the ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the circulation system. Nitrogen oxides from fossil fuel combustion, including diesel exhaust, are the major precursors of ground level ozone, which triggers asthma attacks. These dangerous health risks disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and low-income neighborhoods. Eliminating emissions from City vehicles traversing our neighborhoods will protect public health by reducing the risks from air pollution and will also significantly reduce households’ healthcare costs.

Maryland has set ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change. Addressing the transportation sector’s current contributions to the climate crisis is an important step toward achieving those goals. In 2020, Governor Hogan, along with governors from 14 states and Washington, DC, signed onto the Clean Trucks Initiative, which commits to the goal of all sales of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles being zero-emissions by 2050. Nationally, trucks and buses account for 4% of vehicles on the road but are responsible for nearly 25% of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. According to a 2018 article in *Mass Transit Magazine* titled “How Electric Vehicles Will Reshape Mass Transit,” a single zero-emission bus can eliminate 1,690 tons over carbon dioxide compared to a diesel-powered bus over a 12-year life span.

We need to act now in order to meet our state’s climate goals and Council Bill 21-0159 moves us closer to reaching them by setting the ambitious yet necessary goal for the City of Baltimore to have a 100% zero-emissions fleet by 2040. We commend Councilman Conway for introducing this bill, which would promote public health, mitigate climate change and envision a greener future for Baltimore.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on Council Bill 21-0159.