

Attachment 1

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MGH/KJM/EAL/EDL/NNP/BRM

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE RETREAT

The following is a summary of feedback from attendees of SEWRPC's Environmental Justice Task Force retreat, held on July 12, 2018. The purpose of the retreat was to discuss the history of discriminatory practices in the Region and how regional planning can be part of the solution to the disparities in the Region. To lead these discussions, presentations were given by Dr. Lois Quinn, Mr. Reginald Jackson, and Dr. Kirk Harris. After these discussions, those in attendance were asked to provide feedback on the role of the Task Force in the work of the Commission. Similar comments have been grouped together with responses from Commission staff. Discussion and consultation with the Task Force on its role in the work of the Commission is expected to be continued at future Task Force meetings.

Comments from Task Force Members

- Ms. McNeely: SEWRPC should have an office located in the heart of the City of Milwaukee. The office should have an open door policy to the public. This would create an opportunity to provide education regarding issues such as lead in drinking water and may promote economic development.

Response:

SEWRPC created a Public Involvement and Outreach Division in 2009 for the purpose of establishing and building relationships within the community, particularly with organizations representing environmental justice populations. In addition, the Commission has had a satellite office in the City of Milwaukee since October 2011, when it established an office at 2711 W. Wells Street (City Campus Building owned by Milwaukee County). The Commission temporarily moved the office to 1915 N. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive in February 2015, where it shared space with the Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin, prior to opening its current satellite office in the Global Water Center at 227 W. Freshwater Way in January 2016. Foot traffic to the various Milwaukee office locations has been limited. Direct contact with Public Involvement and Outreach staff has proven to be an effective use of public outreach resources.

- Ms. Schellinger: Issue identification is critical to the work of the Task Force. The Task Force has transitioned from a group interested in advocacy to a listening group over the years. The Task Force should transition back to an advocacy group and vacancies should be filled with experts like the speakers from the retreat who are well versed in issues facing environmental justice populations. Ms. Greene: Staff should reach out to Task Force members for suggestions on candidates to fill vacancies. Potential candidates could include some advocates and some candidates with other backgrounds.

Response:

In addition to geographic representation, guidelines used to consider potential candidates for the Environmental Justice Task Force include representation of low-income populations, minority populations, people with disabilities, and/or transit dependent populations. Efforts will also be made to appoint members to the Task Force with expertise in areas such as transit, workforce development, housing, and aging populations as suggested by current members. Staff will request suggestions from the Task Force for current vacancies and continue this practice as new vacancies arise.

- Ms. Adams: The Task Force membership should include a legal advisor.

Response:

The current Task Force membership includes members with backgrounds in the legal field. In addition, the Commission has an attorney on retainer that can be consulted on an as needed basis.

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- Ms. Adams: SEWRPC reports should state clearly that environmental justice populations include undocumented immigrants residing in the Region.

Response:

Staff has attempted to use neutral language within its reports to be as inclusive as possible. Additional suggestions will be considered as the Task Force reviews SEWRPC reports and other materials.

- Ms. Dunbar: Avoid technical language and jargon in public outreach materials to make them easy to understand for laypeople. Long-range planning is often visionary, which may be difficult for those with serious immediate needs to understand.

Response:

Staff has made a concerted effort to create visually pleasing, easy-to-understand outreach materials for its various planning efforts. This was a particular focus of VISION 2050, for which numerous positive comments were received on outreach materials prepared during the planning process. Commission staff will continue to consult with the Task Force to make improvements in this area.

- Ms. McNeely: Environmental justice experts should have a permanent role in the SEWRPC structure. Ms. Schellinger: Environmental justice experts should provide guidance on developing Task Force meeting agendas.

Response:

The primary role of the Task Force is to enhance the consideration and integration of environmental justice throughout the regional planning process. SEWRPC will assist the Task Force with this role by involving environmental justice experts. This could involve guest speakers at Task Force meetings. This could also involve alternative methods such as peer exchanges where participants with environmental justice expertise, including representatives from other metropolitan planning organizations, gather to share best practices and lessons learned. Commission staff will consult with the Task Force on this suggestion.

- Ms. Schellinger: Task Force comments on regional plans should be documented in the plans. Just listing the Task Force membership makes it appear that members agree with everything in the plan.

Response:

Commission reports always acknowledge the groups and individuals that provide input during the planning process. This does not indicate that all who provide input, including the Task Force, agree with everything in the report. However, a note will be added to the Task Force roster listed in each report directing the public to the related meeting minutes, which document objections members may have toward any specific elements of the report.

- Ms. Adams: Methods should be developed to get input on environmental justice issues from the incarcerated population in the Region.

Response:

Staff, including Public Involvement and Outreach staff, will consult with the Task Force on this suggestion.

- Ms. Dunbar: It is important for SEWRPC to support the Task Force, but it is also important for Task Force members to reach out to the people they serve and provide their perspectives to SEWRPC staff.

Response:

Staff encourages Task Force members to share regional planning information with the communities they serve as another source of public input that can enhance the consideration and incorporation of environmental justice throughout the regional planning process.

- Ms. Dunbar: The Task Force should perform a SWOT analysis or similar exercise on planning issues facing the Region to establish criteria for developing agendas and reviewing materials (i.e., a "cheat sheet").

Response:

Staff will consult with the Task Force on this suggestion.

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- Ms. Greene: Task Force members should have input on meeting agendas and there should be an update on public involvement and outreach on every agenda. Commissioner Nelson: Task Force members should drive meeting agendas and action items should be addressed.

Response:

Staff will share potential agenda items with Task Force members and ask for additional suggestions prior to each meeting. Staff will also seek approval of meeting agendas from the Task Force Chair. Public Involvement and Outreach Division updates will be included on every agenda.

- Ms. Greene: The Task Force should meet in community settings such as libraries, schools, or churches.

Response:

Staff will schedule future Task Force meetings in community facilities such as libraries, schools, and churches. Task Force members are encouraged to suggest specific locations.

- Ms. McNeely: More technology options, such as video conferencing or mobile apps, should be available to make the Task Force more appealing to younger individuals.

Response:

Staff will consult with the Task Force on this suggestion.

Comments from Others in Attendance

- Ms. Rotker: SEWRPC plans discuss funding limitations for transit, but should explicitly acknowledge that decline or lack of transit has a racially discriminatory result. This acknowledgment should be presented prominently in applicable regional plans. The Task Force should be consulted on methods to prevent denial or reduction in benefits to environmental justice populations from regional plans.

Response:

One of the primary functions of the Task Force is to advise and recommend methods to prevent the denial or reduction in benefits to environmental justice populations from regional plans. Staff presents regional plans as they are developed throughout the planning processes to assist the Task Force in this role. Staff will continue this practice and consult with the Task Force on ways to improve this practice. Staff will also continue to discuss the negative impacts of reductions in public transit service in applicable plan reports and materials.

- Ms. Brown-Martin: SEWRPC should attempt to educate State and local officials on regional planning issues such as housing, transit, and the economy. Commissioner Rothstein: Running for elected office or supporting candidates that understand environmental justice issues would be the most effective method for addressing environmental justice issues. Preparing budgets is one of the most important roles of an elected official, and educating elected officials on the high cost of poverty will impact their priorities.

Response:

Past education efforts have included requesting counties and local governments in the Region to endorse regional plans; reports to County Boards and local governing bodies; individual or group presentations to local, county, and State elected officials; meetings with State legislators to discuss VISION 2050; and staff attendance at a wide variety of community/organizational meetings and events throughout the Region. Staff will continue these efforts and consult with the Task Force regarding methods to improve these efforts.

- Ms. Rotker: SEWRPC should analyze and report on whether communities are implementing or rejecting regional plan recommendations.

Response:

The Commission currently undertakes several efforts to monitor regional plan implementation. The Commission prepares an annual report that includes an extensive plan monitoring section. The Commission also prepares a regional housing plan implementation report annually that documents progress towards implementing the housing plan recommendations. Every four years, the Commission conducts an interim review and update of the regional transportation plan. The interim review re-examines plan forecasts, measures transportation system performance, and assesses the implementation

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of the regional transportation plan recommendations. In addition, the Commission thoroughly assesses progress towards implementing regional land use and transportation plan recommendations about every 10 years when major plan updates are prepared. Staff will consult with the Task Force regarding methods to improve monitoring and reporting community progress toward regional plan implementation, potentially through the annual report.