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November 30, 2020

Dear Chair Kafoury and Commissioners,

This year all of Multnomah County (County) wrestled with confronting current and historical injustice and racism in our criminal justice system, over a week of off-the-chart hazardous air quality from increasingly routine record-setting wildfires, both nearby and across the region, and the ongoing, deadly coronavirus pandemic. The Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI) thanks the Board of County Commissioners (Board) and our other public servants for leadership that prioritized public health and safety in uncertain times. We also commend the Board on its policy response in establishing the [Multnomah County Justice and Equity Agenda](#) (Justice Agenda) to “create systematic change through tangible policy actions.”

ACSI would also like to draw the Board’s attention to the region’s permanent and temporary farmworkers that help plant, tend, harvest, process, and bring to market the products we consume and export. State and federal laws do not adequately protect these un- or under-represented individuals and families, who may also be underserved by health, transportation, and other services. By the nature of their work, they are particularly at risk of the coronavirus, hazardous air quality, heat exposure impacts, poor water quality, housing issues, paycheck or employment issues, and discriminatory treatment. In accordance with the Environmental Justice Resolution, ACSI recommends the Board and County gather additional information on the burdens and needs of farmworkers in the County’s current and future work programs.

ACSI believes the following recommendations will further the County’s important Justice Agenda, assist farmworkers and frontline communities, and advance the County’s environmental justice and climate commitments.

1. Direct the Office of Sustainability to engage jurisdictions, transportation committees, and community coalitions to begin a discussion on climate-friendly, innovative, equitable, and permanent transportation funding options;
2. Direct the Office of Sustainability to create an updated plan and timeline for the County to continue its internal commitments in the Climate Action Plan;
3. Direct the Office of Sustainability to create a baseline study and preliminary, iterative strategic plan to transition community-wide electricity needs to renewable energy by 2035, as provided in the 100x50 Resolution; and,
4. Support community-raised tangible policy actions:
  - a. Recognize and further the emerging transportation goals and recommendations of community coalitions; and,

- b. Immediately begin the outreach and organization process to support co-creation of community climate action planning through the Climate Justice Initiative.

### **Transportation Recommendations**

Although Metro’s “Get Moving 2020” initiative did not pass, the County should consider how to advance, in accordance with the County’s equity, justice, and climate goals, the Burnside Bridge project, transit service improvements, other County transportation needs, and a universal YouthPass. The latter program, supported by the careful research of the Multnomah Youth Commission and others, is an explicit Climate Action Plan (CAP) commitment that would reduce carbon emissions while fostering lifelong transit use, thriving communities, and environmental justice goals. CAP, Recommendation 4D. Regarding the County’s transportation needs, the County should complete safety and equity priority projects identified in East County, such as crosswalks, sidewalks, safe routes to school, and main streets, as well as consider the expansion of the use of bus priority “rose” lanes. The County should explore both traditional and innovative options to close the funding gaps from Metro’s initiative and decreased tax revenues.

Beyond funding County projects, ACSI believes a broader conversation is needed to innovate transportation funding in order to protect and expand existing transit service, increase reliability, and provide fare stability and equity. TriMet and Metro could use support in approaching transit service funding with climate, equity and permanence in mind. We need a long-term solution and an advocate, especially facing ridership and transportation funding reductions. The County Commissioners and Office of Sustainability can continue to take a leadership role in transportation planning by bringing the relevant jurisdictions and community coalitions together to tackle this difficult issue in a truly innovative and sustainable way for our region.

ACSI also believes it is important to recognize and support the independently emerging goals and recommendations of grassroots transportation efforts, including Reimagine Oregon, the Oregon Just Transition Alliance, the Getting There Together Coalition, and the Clean and Just Transportation Network. Traditional organizational silos may hinder these coalitions. County leadership, the Office of Sustainability, and the County’s Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) are in a position to convene and support the community efforts.

### **Climate and Energy Recommendations**

The Climate Justice Initiative announced by the County and City of Portland will bring forth and prioritize climate actions based upon a community-driven engagement process. It is intended to be a co-development opportunity, rather than government planning in consultation with others, but it will only succeed if the County and City of Portland diligently pursue an open and equitable process and commit to furthering the outcomes. See generally Environmental Justice Resolution and Justice Agenda. ACSI commends this approach but emphasizes that the process must commence immediately – reaching out to all neighborhood associations, coalitions, other jurisdictions, and creating opportunities for input online, virtually, in writing, and eventually by forum – because much action is needed and there is no time to waste.

ACSI believes it is extremely important that the County continue all efforts identified in the CAP that are within the County’s sphere of direct influence, particularly internal County actions. In 2021, ACSI recommends that the Office of Sustainability and relevant cross-departmental working groups revisit the CAP and develop an updated plan and timeline for implementation of County actions.

Notwithstanding the above, the County has resolved “to meet 100 percent of community-wide electricity needs in Multnomah County with renewable energy by 2035.” 100x50 Resolution (“100x50”) p.3 ¶2. While the County has already achieved 100 percent renewable electricity for its own use, 100x50 p.3 ¶3 (without RECs!), there is no formal work plan to transition the community. ACSI recommends that the Board direct the Office of Sustainability to prepare, for Board approval in 2021, baseline studies and an iterative strategic plan designed to achieve that goal through community action. The County may not have answers yet, or access to relevant or disclosable data, and the Climate Justice Initiative may change the plan and toolkit of options, but the County needs to begin assembling information.

ACSI suggests that any report first recognize what the County and others have done to date, as well as the importance of flexibility for co-creation and administration. Baseline data reports should include:

- Our energy supply by type, origin and utility;
- Generation and transmission costs;
- Our energy demand by type, use, utility, and prices paid;
- Trends by season, day and time;
- Largest energy consumers by type and use;
- Efficiency of energy use;
- Estimates of current internal combustion;
- Estimates of pollution levels tied to electricity; and
- Utility planning already underway.

If possible, a report should:

- Break out analysis of community infrastructure, low-income households, Communities of Color, and Tribes to evaluate these needs, how they are served, and whether benefits and burdens are adequately shared. 100x50 p.3-4 ¶¶4-8.
- Identify both supply-side and demand-side opportunities and barriers for conversion to “renewable energy” sources for community-wide electricity needs. 100x50 p.2 ¶¶n, p-q, s-u.
- Identify barriers for timely conversion, including: utilities or suppliers and their public timelines for transition; necessary legislative, rule, code, or PUC changes for toolkit options; and specific barriers for community programs or projects. 100x50 p.4 ¶¶7-13.
- Include backward and forward-looking trendlines and projections on data sets to show current successes and identify places to focus efforts and support.
- Establish intervening goals and structures helpful to meet the target and eliminate barriers.

We appreciate that the Board and County employees continue to do their best responding to the pandemic. We thank you for your efforts and hope you will also take action on these recommendations next year to further the Justice Agenda, the 100x50 and environmental justice resolutions, and the new Climate Justice Initiative.

Sincerely,

Your 2020 ACSI Members