NESCAUM responses – Marilynn Marsh-Robinson

What are the most important transportation needs, improvements, and priorities for EJ communities in NC?

* First and foremost, I think we need to engage EJ and diverse communities to better understand their needs and priorities concerning transportation. I don’t want to speak for these communities. Hearing directly from them is crucial.
* Low income and EJ communities should be prioritized as these communities are most likely to live near warehouses, highway corridors and bus/transit traffic that comprise health and air quality. With what is being proposed in electrification and infrastructure, communities most impacted from ghg emissions from the transportation sector should receive benefit and see placement of electric infrastructure and trucks/buses first, especially as it relates to public dollars.
* Access to infrastructure – Equity should be considered when thinking of placement of infrastructure and access to resources. We should be thinking about investing in low income communities, multifamily dwellings, and equitable distribution throughout the state – in urban and rural areas.
* Econ development – We should also consider how funds are distributed and how/if smaller, local contractors are able to compete in the bidding process for installation and maintenance services.
* Workforce development - Also as we transition to the clean energy economy, how are we preparing the new workforce? As electrification and transportation needs approach, can we encourage transition training programs or new programs by partnering with community colleges and workforce development agencies and encourage hiring at the local level and keep money in local economies? Perhaps thinking about the entire supply chain this change in innovation will bring will be helpful to understand the full impact of workforce development and economic opportunities this industry could have.
* Low-cost public transportation is extremely important for workers and other essential necessities such as shopping, worship and recreation for urban EJ communities. Often, these are essential workers who rely on dependable and convenient stops.
* In rural EJ communities, where most are also essential workers, transportation is equally as important. Typically, public transportation is not available due to non-feasibility. Thus, these individuals rely on personal and/or group options and transitioning to ZEV will result in significantly increased costs to convert ZEVs.
* Public service groups and community-based organization groups that provide transportation to EJ communities for religious, educational general and recreational needs will find economic difficulties in transitioning to ZEVs.
* Schools in urban and rural EJ communities are generally under resourced and school children are extremely reliant on school buses, thus the need of school buses in these low resourced areas must be addressed.
* These groups will require financial assistance in order to efficiently convert to ZEVs.
* The financial assistance whether in rebates, subsidies or other incentives cannot be the “same” or “equal to” what is set aside for others. In fact, they should be increased in order to be equitable.

EJ communities are diverse. EJ communities perceive transportation needs differently depending on their immediate needs. For example: elderly or infirm individuals may need an EZ Rider (small bus) transport for medical appointments or dialysis treatments, say.

* Does the MHD-ZEV program administration intend to conduct a widespread survey of NC's diverse EJ communities to have any data on the actual needs as perceived by the EJ communities?
* How will community stakeholders be identified?

Do you see specific benefits or concerns regarding this project?

I am very pleased that DAQ wanted to know more about equity and obtaining impacted communities’ input at the beginning of the NESCAUM process.

This is an opportunity for the state to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and help achieve the goals of EO80. I think there is flexibility under the NESCAUM platform to develop a range of policies to achieve the goals outlined in the MOU. In addition to environmental goals, I think we should also understand and be intentional about stating the health benefits and economic development opportunities.

* Benefits – the availability of “clean” transportation will mitigate the detrimental health effects caused by greenhouse gases, nitrous oxides and particulate matter. EJ communities typically are at most risk and are first line recipients because these emissions are abundant in their communities due to the overwhelming presence of air polluting industries and other manufacturing operations.
* The concerns are great as they add to the economic hardships already faced by EJ communities. They also increase the health disparities gap, already resulting from these pollutants.

Is there additional information you would like to have about health, safety or other impacts related to this project while considering these questions?

* Identification of communities impacted by medium and heavy-duty vehicles/ID of Priority areas or Concern
* Info on how health can be improved with implementation of electric vehicles
* How are some of the other states implementing equity in their plan? What does their outreach to EJ communities look like?
* In general, what are some of the overall equity or EJ concerns/reactions to the NESCAUM platform?
* No, I believe these have been described and they are readily accessible to those addressing of us who are addressing these issues. However, I would like to address needed internal DEQ requirements. This is a major effort if NC is to meet zero emissions by 2050. I see two major requirements for meeting this goal, especially as they relate to EJ communities: (a) A full-time staff person with the necessary expertise, demeanor and commitment to EJ communities **must** be identified or hired and be the Point of Contact for DEQ and the EJ community. I suggest that it not be someone in DEQ looking for a new job, or under performing in a present job. Often these types are lacking in knowledge, proficiency and tend to hang on to “old” practices within DEQ. This should be a person from the “outside” with all the necessary expertise to perform efficiently in this role. (b) DEQ must go on record by proposing to the governor the kind of budget that will be required to push ZEVs throughout NC and to hire individuals with the expertise to ensure success.

What are the best ways in which to share this information and engage with communities?

* It is important to partner and share information about this process with communities working on climate justice, goods movement, environmental justice, health, air quality and other issues that relate to transportation. We can start from the existing partnership list and expand from there.
* DEQ should have webinars related to this and ask/collaborate with communities to host sessions as well.
* We can also place information on the website with educational resources.
* I hope that DEQ will continue to use the EJEAB as a resource and use the venue to update the public and solicit input as well.
* Meet directly with EJ community groups and present clear, “plain-language,” and respectful informational sessions. (I suggest informational as opposed to educational sessions.) Emphasize the benefits, but also identify economic costs. **Ensure equity – if EJ communities produce less environmental pollutants should they share equally in the economic burden of those who produce more environmental pollutants due to their economic privilege?**
* Allow community groups to set the number of sessions and time length at the onset of the engagement period. Meet often.
* Communicate with religious leaders and also conduct informational sessions in churches.
* Request agenda items ahead of sessions.
* Give feedback to concerns in a timely manner.
* Be prepared with information on how increased costs will be subsidized/mitigated/incentivized, if appropriate.
* Recognize that rural communities will have increased transportation needs as opposed to urban communities. This is because, typically the infrastructure is already in place in urban areas.
* Ensure that local industries will be held to the same high standards, as well as commercial vehicles coming into and out of the communities.
* If communities will be responsible for infrastructure costs (e.g., tax increases and/or public transportation costs) be transparent with this at the onset.
* Consider a partnership with the NC Superintendent of Public Instruction to support a K-12 focus on transitioning to ZEV in the same manner that K-12 focused on no smoking, then recycling and environmental topics that children stimulated their parents to embrace. NC can be a leader in suggesting this to others that are part of the MOU.

Please let us know if you would be interested and available to be a Point of Contact for NC. Or if you have anyone else you would recommend we bring into this effort, please let us know.

* Marilynn Marsh-Robinson: I am interested in this topic and available to help as needed. I work on the NESCAUM effort in my work at EDF.
* Marian Johnson-Thompson: I do not believe I have the expertise for this nor the time. A staff person with the necessary expertise, demeanor and commitment to EJ communities **must** be identified or hired and be the Point of Contact for DEQ and NC. Also, engaging respected, trusted and community focused local faculty with relevant expertise to accompany DAQ staff to informational sessions might be considered.

Other Comments/Questions received:

EJ Stakeholder engagement is an important component of this program.

The EJ Community goals are listed as:

* + Share equitably in the benefits of truck and bus electrification
  + Provide meaningful opportunities to provide input
  + Meet community needs
  + Build long-term relationships

2. Beyond industry, what is the game plan for small independent Black, Brown, BIPOC service oriented businesses and residents in rural communities are dependent on their private vehicles as essential to their livelihood.

Q's:

* How can the MHD-ZEV program help rural communities bridge the divide to afford and promote the use of ZEV's?
* Are their thoughts about a subsidies program to bridge the ZEV affordability gap?