

Gas Transition Subgroup Meeting Notes

Meeting Details:

- 8/31/22, 3:30-5:00

Council Member Participants:

- Rory Christian
- Mario Cilento
- Donna DeCarolis
- Gavin Donohue
- Dennis Elsenbeck
- Bob Howarth
- Roberta Reardon
- Raya Salter

Meeting Agenda/Topics Covered:

- Discussion of Draft Assessment Criteria for Alternative Fuels developed by the Alternative Fuels Subgroup
- Discussion of Gas Transition Subgroup Framework Key Considerations pertaining to Alternative Fuels

Key Takeaways:

- Alternative Fuels Subgroup Draft Assessment Criteria
 - The subgroup discussed the qualitative nature of the Draft Assessment Criteria. Some subgroup members believe that criteria around life cycle GHG and co-pollutant emissions should be more quantitative. Other subgroup members believe that a qualitative approach is appropriate at this early stage when information on alternative fuels sources, processes, uses, and emissions are sometimes incomplete and technologies are evolving.
 - The subgroup discussed the value of pilot programs for the assessment of alternative fuels. Some subgroup members feel that pilots are valuable for providing real-world data on the use of alternative fuels, while others contend that there is enough information to determine that some applications of alternative fuels cannot support the emissions reductions required by the CLCPA, and therefore should not be used in pilots.
 - The subgroup discussed the appropriateness of applying the same assessment criteria to all uses of alternative fuels, with one member expressing concern that using one set of criteria fails to clearly communicate the different impacts of various fuels and applications. One subgroup member suggested providing feedback to the Alternative Fuels subgroup that it would be helpful to clarify to the public on some of the uses for these alternative fuels within the criteria including how it will be used for evaluation of fuels in different sectors (buildings vs. transportation sectors).
 - One subgroup member objected to the manner in which the Draft Assessment Criteria frames the impact of alternative fuels on disadvantaged communities and suggests that

the Alternative Fuels Subgroup focus not only on whether a fuel reduces emissions in disadvantaged communities in the short term, but also on whether it thwarts or enables the clean energy transition in the long term. This and other feedback will be shared with the Alternative Fuels subgroup.

- Gas Transition Subgroup Framework Key Considerations pertaining to Alternative Fuels
 - The subgroup remains divided over whether hydrogen and renewable natural gas are appropriate for use in the gas distribution system.
 - One subgroup member explained that the biomethane produced by landfills and anaerobic digesters is distinct from renewable natural gas that can be used in the gas distribution system. That member noted that converting biomethane to pipeline-quality gas is an energy-intensive process that creates emissions and expressed the opinion that on-site applications of biomethane for heating or powering fuel cells are more consistent with the achievement of CLCPA goals.
 - Other subgroup members point to programs underway in New York and other states to explore opportunities for using hydrogen and renewable natural gas in pipeline applications. Some subgroup members argue that the emissions intensity of alternative fuels can be mitigated by engineering and regulatory solutions.
 - Several subgroup members expressed the opinion that the Scoping Plan should not prematurely disallow any fuels or applications that might prove valuable to the clean energy transition in the future. The subgroup discussed the need for flexibility, while one member cautioned against ignoring the science in the quest for open-endedness.
 - The subgroup debated whether there is consensus among independent scientists about the feasibility and emissions implications of different fuels and applications.
 - The subgroup discussed the need for the Scoping Plan to send clear signals to the market to encourage investment in a range of alternative fuels, citing investments in New York in hydrogen projects, in particular.
 - The subgroup discussed the need to be specific in all conversations about which fuels and applications are under consideration, because each fuel has multiple possible applications, and there are different emissions implications associated with each fuel and use case.
 - The subgroup agreed to revisit the language pertaining to alternative fuels in the Gas System Transition chapter of the Draft Scoping Plan to ensure that it reflects the subgroup members' recommendations on the role of alternative fuels.