

Jason Merges

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan for Washington's use of the VW mitigation funds. As written, the plan may achieve two critically important goals:

- 1) Achieve healthy air in communities that have historically borne a disproportionate share of air pollution
- 2) Accelerate the deployment of all-electric engines

During the implementation of the plan, I strongly urge you to maintain close consultation with environmental justice and public health stakeholders in order to achieve these goals. Communities of color and low-income households may face significant social and economic barriers to accessing clean air. Your continued effective engagement will ensure that selected projects are responsive to community needs and deliver the greatest health benefits. Furthermore, as you explore funding projects that qualify for matching funds, I ask that you keep in consideration those communities that may not be able to offer a match but still have an acute need for air quality improvements.

It is smart for Ecology to consider other relevant laws such as Washington State's carbon emission reduction targets. Utilized effectively, the VW settlement funds offer an opportunity for Washington to accelerate the growth of a modern, zero-emissions transportation system. I appreciate that you have chosen to prioritize funding all-electric engines and target public transit fleets first. In order to make these purchases more cost-effective, I urge you to include Governor Inslee's Executive Order 14-04 in the plan, which requires state agencies to include the cost of carbon emissions in cost-benefit analyses for public fleet purchases.

I agree that the VW funding provides an opportunity to do more than just reduce the diesel emissions produced by the affected vehicles. It can sever the link between air quality and social status and better position our state to tackle climate change.

Thank you for your work in creating this draft with strong goals, principles, and priorities. As a member of the Washington Environmental Council, I look forward to staying engaged in the plan as it moves forward.