



# Thermodynamic properties of carbon dioxide clusters by M06-2X and dispersion-corrected B2PLYP-D theory

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## ABSTRACT

The M06-2X and B2PLYP-D functionals have been applied to predict structures and energies for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters up to  $n = 16$ . A comparison between M06-2X, B2PLYP-D and benchmark CCSD(T) results indicates that M06-2X is capable of providing accurate binding energies. Stepwise M06-2X  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clustering free energies exhibit a sharp discontinuity at the magic cluster size  $n = 13$  and systematically shift to more exergonic values with decreasing temperature, in particular for larger clusters. These results indicate that the M06-2X method provides an accurate and cost effective description of non-covalent interactions in  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters and therefore may provide important information on  $\text{CO}_2$  nucleation phenomena.

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## 1. Introduction

Dispersion interactions play an important role in nature and are involved in the stabilization of a plethora of different molecular aggregates [1]. Carbon dioxide clusters  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  are a typical example in which monomers interact through dispersion. The ability to accurately describe these type of interactions is crucial in understanding fundamental molecular-scale processes controlling the chemistry of carbon dioxide. These weak interactions pose a special challenge for experimental techniques and are therefore in many cases either difficult or impossible to explore [2–4]. On the other hand, interaction energies of carbon dioxide complexes have been explored using both correlated second-order Møller–Plesset MP2 [5–8] and coupled cluster CCSD(T) theory [5,9] up to the complete basis set (CBS) limit level. However, high level correlation methods, such as CCSD(T) scale as the  $N^7$  and are therefore computationally demanding. Given the cost of CCSD(T) and MP2 computations on larger molecular systems, there is a critical requirement for computationally less demanding methods that deliver results of comparable accuracy for large non-covalent chemical systems.

The density functional theory (DFT) approach is a widespread method for examining chemical systems with up to several hundred atoms, however, application of routine DFT to systems with non-covalent interactions has been restricted due the failure of most DFT methods, for instance, B3LYP and PW91, to accurately capture dispersion interactions [10]. While B3LYP and other popular DFT methods fail in describing dispersion interactions in non-

covalent complexes, dispersion-corrected B2PLYP-D [11] and M06-2X functionals [12] have demonstrated excellent performance relative to high level correlated methods such as MP2 and CCSD(T) for a wide range of non-covalent interactions [13,14]. However, there are no DFT-D or M06-2X data currently available that would serve as a performance benchmark for predicting structures and energies of carbon dioxide clusters. In this study we examine stable structures and energies for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters up to  $n = 16$  using M06-2X and the dispersion-corrected B2PLYP-D method. We compare our theoretical clustering energies with those predicted at the CCSD(T) level of theory and report DFT energies and thermodynamic properties for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters with  $n \leq 16$ .

## 2. Methods

In this study we have applied the recently developed Minnesota meta-exchange–correlation functional M06-2X, which has been specifically parametrized to capture medium-range dispersion interactions (up to 5 Å) [15] and therefore should be well-suited to describe dispersion-bound systems such as  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$ . In addition, we have conducted a survey of structures and energies of  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters using dispersion-corrected B2PLYP-D theory [11]. In brief, the B2PLYP-D approach employs a damped semi-empirical  $R^{-6}$  dispersion term that is summed into the DFT energy. A detailed summary of the B2PLYP-D approach is given in Schwabe and Grimme [11]. All DFT  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  cluster calculations presented here incorporate a counterpoise (CP) correction for basis set superpositions error (BSSE). In order to benchmark our DFT clustering energies, we have evaluated the performance of M06-2X and B2PLYP-D against the hybrid B3PW91 functional and higher-level CCSD(T) computations for the carbon dioxide dimer and trimer. All  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  starting geometries with  $2 \leq n \leq 16$  have been built in accord with structures

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proposed by molecular dynamic simulations of carbon dioxide clusters [16]. Geometry optimizations, zero-point energy (ZPE) and thermal corrections have been calculated using the GAUSSIAN09 program [17] and the basis set applied in this study correspond to aug-cc-pVDZ for C and O.

### 3. Results and discussion

A comparison between various DFT (M06-2X, B2PLYP-D and B3PW91) and benchmark CCSD(T) cluster structures and binding energies for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  with  $n = 2$  and 3 are presented in Table 1, and optimized M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ structures for carbon dioxide clusters up to  $n = 16$  are shown in Figure 1. A comparison between M06-2X and B2PLYP-D optimized geometries of the slipped parallel ( $\text{C}_{2h}$ ) and T-shaped ( $\text{C}_{2v}$ )  $\text{CO}_2$  dimer and those derived from CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ [9] suggests that both DFT functionals are able to predict structures that are in good agreement with high level ab initio computations (see Table 1). The DFT prediction for the C...C distance in the  $\text{C}_{2h}$  dimer is 3.380 Å for M06-2X and 3.494 Å for B2PLYP-D, and these values, in particular DFT-D results, compare well with higher level CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ (3.463 Å). The C...O distance between  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers in the  $\text{C}_{2v}$  dimer predicted by CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ is 2.932 Å, while DFT predictions are 2.886 Å (M06-2X) and 2.950 Å (B2PLYP-D). The CCO angle ( $\theta$ ) between the monomers in the slipped parallel dimer is 59.4° with M06-2X and 59.5° with B2PLYP-D, while  $\theta$  is 58.1° with CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ.

In general, good agreement was found between DFT and CCSD(T) results [5] for the optimized structures of the cyclic ( $\text{C}_{3h}$ ) and non-cyclic ( $\text{C}_2$ )  $\text{CO}_2$  trimers. The M06-2X and B2PLYP-D distances between the  $\text{CO}_2$  carbon atoms in the cyclic trimer are 3.834 and 3.998 Å, respectively, while the CCSD(T) value is 4.01 Å. The monomer orientation angle  $\beta$  in the cyclic trimer is 39.2° at the M06-2X level of theory and 39.0° with the B2PLYP-D method, which, for reference, is very close to the CCSD(T) value of 39.1°. The out-of-plane tilt angles  $\gamma$  in the cyclic trimer predicted by M06-2X and B2PLYP-D are 0° and exactly match results predicted by CCSD(T) theory [5]. The distance between both basal  $\text{CO}_2$  carbon atoms in the  $\text{C}_2$  trimer is predicted to be 3.533 Å with M06-2X and 3.627 Å with B2PLYP-D. This distance is calculated to be 3.737 Å at the CCSD(T) level and a slightly longer distance, 3.761 Å, is found by experiment [18]. The DFT predictions for the out-of-plane tilt angle  $\gamma$  in the non-cyclic  $\text{C}_2$  trimer are 12.0° and

11.9° for M06-2X and B2PLYP-D, respectively, and these values are very close to the CCSD(T) level value of 11.5°.

Figure 1 presents M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ optimized structures of  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters up to the  $n = 16$ . In brief, M06-2X structures of  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  presented here closely match results from IR spectroscopic experiments [19,20]. Recent rotational spectroscopic work [20] has indicated that the  $\text{CO}_2$  tetramer is a trigonal pyramidal structure, while the  $\text{CO}_2$  pentamer is a trigonal bipyramid with a central ring in which all three  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers are tilted out-of-plane. High resolution IR spectroscopic studies of the  $\text{CO}_2$  hexamer [19] have identified two highly symmetric  $\text{CO}_2$  hexamers: one that is formed by stacking two cyclic trimers ( $\text{S}_6$ ) and a tetragonal bipyramidal structure ( $\text{S}_4$ ) consisting of a four-membered ring capped by two monomers (see Figure 1). The  $\text{CO}_2$  heptamer has been proposed to be a highly asymmetrical cluster consisting of a pentagonal ring and two  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers positioned along the  $c$ -axis above and below the ring [19]. There are, to our knowledge, no experimental results for the structures of  $(\text{CO}_2)_8$ , however, Takeuchi [16] has shown, using empirical potentials, that the  $\text{CO}_2$  octamer is another highly asymmetric structure with five  $\text{CO}_2$  molecules arranged in a ring, with two  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers above and one  $\text{CO}_2$  monomer below the ring. For larger  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters, i.e. with  $n = 9$ –16, the most stable cluster structures are derived from a 3–6–3 ring motif, composed of a staggered equatorial ring of six monomers capped by two rings of three  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers with one centrally enclosed  $\text{CO}_2$  monomer ( $n = 13$ ); this motif is also conserved in larger  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters, in other words,  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters with  $n = 14, 15$  and 16 are built by packing  $\text{CO}_2$  monomers onto the surface of the  $\text{CO}_2$  tridecamer. In general, the structures of  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters are well-known, thus this study will focus primarily on the stepwise DFT binding energies and thermodynamic properties of individual  $\text{CO}_2$  clustering reactions. In view of the importance of  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters as a typical system driven by dispersion-driven interactions and their perceived relevance in atmospheric chemistry and  $\text{CO}_2$  cloud nucleation [21] we have evaluated, by M06-2X and B2PLYP-D level theory, the energies and thermodynamic properties of  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  in the size range  $2 \leq n \leq 16$ .

Table 1 lists a comparison between DFT and CCSD(T) benchmark binding energies for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  with  $n = 2, 3$ ; these data are further expanded in Table 2 and Figure 2 to include stepwise and total M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ level  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clustering energies, enthalpies, entropies and the temperature-dependence of the free energy change up to  $n = 16$ . The uncorrected electronic binding energy  $\Delta E_e$  for the slipped-parallel  $\text{C}_{2h}$  dimer is predicted to be  $-1.47$  kcal/mol at the M06-2X level and  $-1.56$  kcal/mol using the B2PLYP-D approach; the DFT binding energies for the T-shaped dimer are consistently smaller than that for the slipped-parallel dimer ( $\sim 0.3$ – $0.4$  kcal/mol less). For comparison, the CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ binding energy is  $-1.86$  kcal/mol ( $\text{C}_{2h}$ ) and  $-1.64$  kcal/mol ( $\text{C}_{2v}$ ) [9], which is around 20% and 16% more than for the M06-2X and B2PLYP-D approach, respectively. The M06-2X and B2PLYP-D total binding energies for the cyclic  $\text{C}_{3h}$  trimer are  $-4.08$  and  $-4.19$  kcal/mol, while DFT predictions for the stacked noncyclic  $\text{C}_2$  trimer are slightly larger,  $-4.15$  kcal/mol with M06-2X and  $-4.26$  kcal/mol with B2PLYP-D; a slightly smaller  $\text{C}_{3h}$  binding energy,  $-4.02$  kcal/mol, and  $\text{C}_2$  binding energy,  $-4.11$  kcal/mol, is predicted with CCSD(T) theory [5]. It would appear that the B2PLYP-D approach moderately underestimates the trimer binding energy, relative to CCSD(T), while M06-2X binding energies are sufficiently close to CCSD(T) making this DFT method suitable for studying large  $\text{CO}_2$  cluster. Furthermore, since B2PLYP-D calculations are prohibitively expensive relative to M06-2X, we suggest that the later DFT method be used for calculations of larger  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  clusters. Table 1 also lists geometric parameters and binding energies of  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters calculated at the B3PW91/aug-cc-pVDZ level of theory. Not surprisingly, the B3PW91 functional fails to

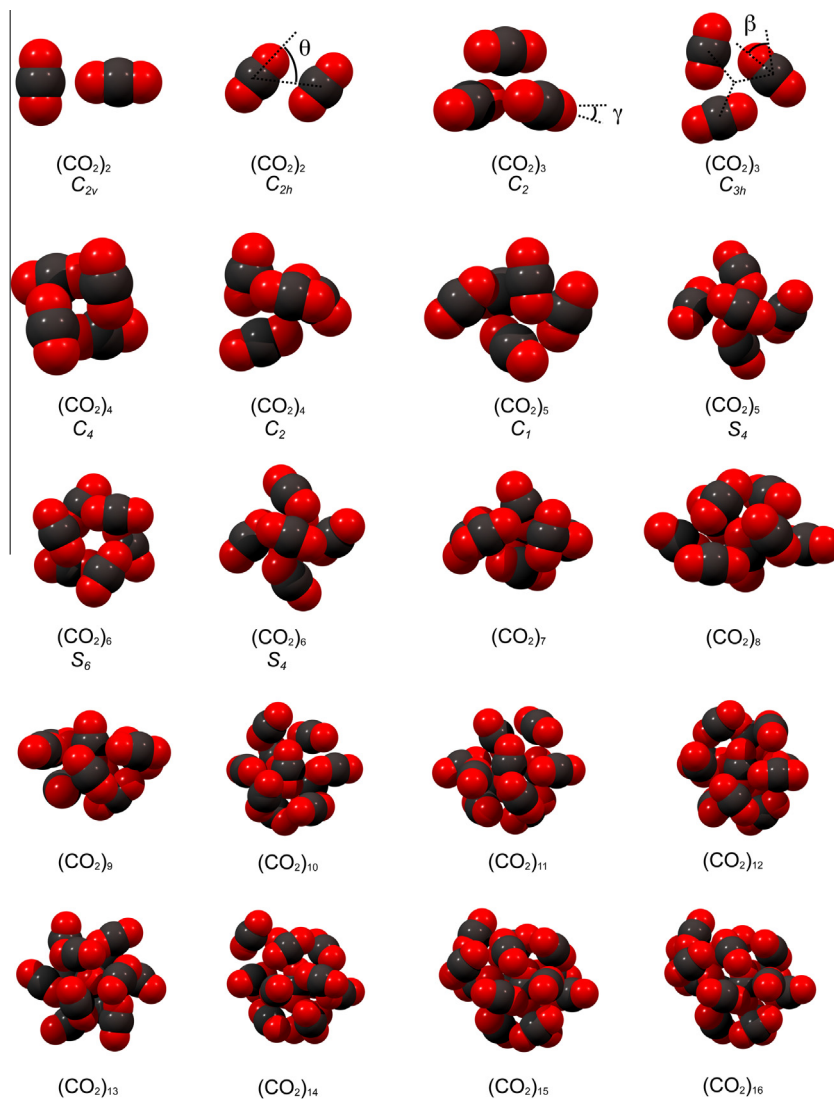
**Table 1**  
Optimized geometric parameters and electronic binding energies ( $\Delta E_e$ ) in kcal/mol for  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  with  $n = 2, 3$ .

Cluster			CCSD(T)	B3PW91	M06-2X	B2PLYP-D
$n = 2$	$\text{C}_{2h}$	$\text{R}_{\text{C}\cdots\text{C}}$	3.463 Å <sup>a</sup>	4.698 Å	3.380 Å	3.494 Å
			3.503 Å <sup>b</sup>			
		$\theta$	58.1° <sup>a</sup>	53.4°	59.4°	59.5°
	$\text{C}_{2v}$		58.9° <sup>b</sup>			
		$\Delta E_e$	$-1.86^a$	$-0.57$	$-1.47$	$-1.56$
			$-1.49^b$			
$n = 3$	$\text{C}_{2v}$	$\text{R}_{\text{C}\cdots\text{O}}$	2.932 Å <sup>a</sup>	3.818 Å	2.886 Å	2.950 Å
			2.949 Å <sup>b</sup>			
		$\Delta E_e$	$-1.64^a$	$-0.19$	$-1.20$	$-1.01$
	$\text{C}_{3h}$		$-1.20^b$			
		$\text{R}_{\text{C}\cdots\text{C}}$	4.01 Å <sup>c</sup>	4.841 Å	3.834 Å	3.998 Å
			$-4.02^c$	$-0.57$	$-4.08$	$-4.19$
		$\beta$	39.1° <sup>c</sup>	40.6°	39.2°	39.0°
	$\text{C}_2$	$\text{R}_{\text{C}\cdots\text{C}}$	3.737 Å <sup>c</sup>	5.628 Å	3.533 Å	3.627 Å
			$-4.11^c$	$-0.39$	$-4.15$	$-4.26$
		$\Delta E_e$				
		$\gamma$	11.5° <sup>c</sup>	16.5°	12.0°	11.9°

<sup>a</sup> CCSD(T)/aug-cc-pVDZ.

<sup>b</sup> CCSD(T)/CBS [9].

<sup>c</sup> CCSD(T)/6-311G\* [5].



**Figure 1.** M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ minimum energy structures of carbon dioxide clusters  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  with  $n = 2$ –16.

predict the correct cluster structures and binding energies, which is due to a well-known deficiency in the long range behavior of this functional [22]. Thus, for dispersion bound systems such as  $(\text{CO}_2)_n$  B3PW91 should be avoided in favor of M06-2X and B2PLYP-D.

The M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ stepwise and total binding energies ( $\Delta E_0$ ), before and after CP and ZPE correction, enthalpies ( $\Delta H_{298\text{K}}$ ), entropies ( $\Delta S_{298\text{K}}$ ) and free energies ( $\Delta G$ ) at 5, 50, 150 and 298 K for  $\text{CO}_2$  clustering reactions are summarized in Table 2, and Figure 2 presents the results graphically. The largest discontinuity in the stepwise reaction enthalpy and entropy occurs at  $n = 13$ , with three more moderate discontinuities in the  $\Delta H^\circ$  and  $\Delta S^\circ$  profile at  $n = 4, 7$  and 9. The stepwise M06-2X enthalpy values for carbon dioxide clusters from  $n = 8$  onward to  $n = 12$  decrease significantly slower (by around 0.1–0.3 kcal/mol), in other words, these structures exhibit no special stability. On the other hand, the large negative enthalpy value at  $n = 13$  ( $\Delta H_{12,13}^\circ = -4.32$  kcal/mol) and reduced entropy contribution at 298 K ( $T\Delta S_{12,13}^\circ = -7.74$  kcal/mol) to  $\Delta G^\circ$ , can best be explained by invoking a magic-number  $(\text{CO}_2)_{13}$  cluster with enhanced stability [16]. The observed enthalpy and entropy discontinuity at  $n = 13$  corresponds to the completion of a full  $(\text{CO}_2)_{13}$  cluster (see Figure 1), and thus, the enthalpy and entropy values for higher  $\text{CO}_2$  clustering reactions are less pronounced because subsequent  $\text{CO}_2$  molecules attach to outer surface of the magic cluster where bonding is anticipated

to be weaker. Also shown in Figure 2 are the M06-2X stepwise values of  $\Delta G^\circ$  for the reaction  $(\text{CO}_2)_{n-1} + \text{CO}_2 = (\text{CO}_2)_n$  in the temperature range 50–298 K, and we can see that for  $n = 13$   $\Delta G^\circ$  drops to negative values below around 160 K, pointing to a favorable growth of  $\text{CO}_2$  clusters with decreasing temperature. This trend, for  $n = 13$ , continues as the temperature is further reduced from 150 K ( $\Delta G^\circ = -0.42$  kcal/mol), 50 K ( $\Delta G^\circ = -3.02$  kcal/mol) to 5 K ( $\Delta G^\circ = -4.19$  kcal/mol) (see Table 2). Figure 2 shows that, starting at around 100 K, the clustering free energies  $\Delta G^\circ$  for  $n = 6$ –15 systematically decrease (i.e. shift to exergonic values) with decreasing temperature, and the formation of larger clusters with  $n = 12$ –16 at 50 K seems to be particularly pronounced. In general, the trends in  $\Delta G^\circ$  point towards a favorable stepwise assembly of carbon dioxide clusters at lower temperatures, but not at temperatures above 150 K. The magic cluster  $(\text{CO}_2)_{13}$  however, has a negative  $\Delta G^\circ$  value at 150 K, and therefore would form from a precursor  $(\text{CO}_2)_{12}$  cluster.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study shows that the B2PLYP-D functional is able to predict geometries of carbon dioxide dimers ( $\text{C}_{2h}$  and  $\text{C}_{2v}$ ) and trimers ( $\text{C}_{3h}$  and  $\text{C}_2$ ) that are in good agreement with benchmark CCSD(T) the-

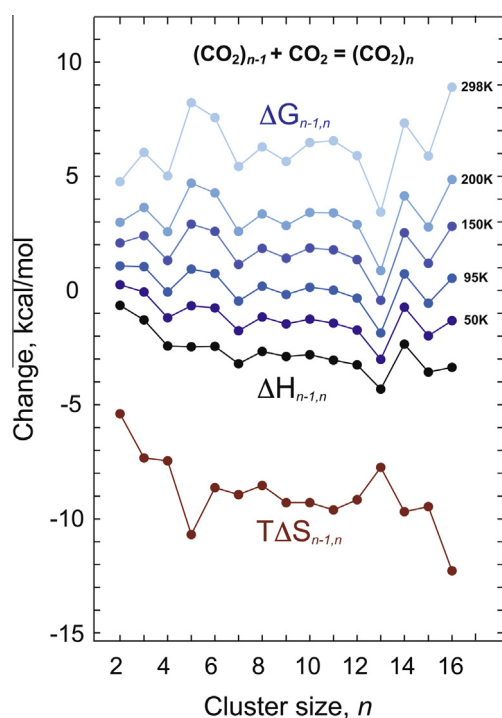
**Table 2**  
M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ stepwise and total changes in the electronic energy ( $\Delta E$ ), enthalpy ( $\Delta H_{298K}$ ), entropy ( $\Delta S_{298K}$ ) and free energy ( $\Delta G$ ) in kcal/mol at 5, 50, 150 and 298 K and 1 bar.

$n$	$\Delta E_e^a$	$\Delta E_e^b$	$\Delta E_e^c$	$\Delta H_{298K}$	$\Delta S_{298K}$	$\Delta G_{5K}$	$\Delta G_{50K}$	$\Delta G_{150K}$	$\Delta G_{298K}$
<i>Incremental energies; <math>(CO_2)_{n-1} + CO_2 = (CO_2)_n</math></i>									
2, C <sub>2h</sub>	-1.47	-1.28	-0.88	-0.65	-18.13	-0.56	0.26	2.07	4.76
3, C <sub>3h</sub>	-2.61	-2.16	-1.72	-1.29	-24.60	-1.16	-0.06	2.40	6.05
4, C <sub>2</sub>	-3.88	-3.33	-2.74	-2.43	-25.02	-2.31	-1.18	1.32	5.02
5, C <sub>1</sub>	-4.12	-3.40	-2.59	-2.46	-35.85	-2.29	-0.67	2.91	8.22
6, S <sub>6</sub>	-4.27	-3.46	-2.77	-2.45	-33.60	-2.28	-0.77	2.59	7.57
7	-4.73	-4.08	-3.32	-3.21	-28.98	-3.06	-1.76	1.14	5.43
8	-4.30	-3.58	-2.93	-2.66	-30.01	-2.51	-1.16	1.84	6.29
9	-4.65	-3.81	-3.23	-2.89	-28.65	-2.75	-1.46	1.41	5.65
10	-4.49	-3.71	-3.10	-2.81	-31.16	-2.66	-1.26	1.86	6.48
11	-4.99	-4.07	-3.13	-3.05	-32.21	-2.88	-1.44	1.79	6.56
12	-5.28	-4.25	-3.47	-3.26	-30.73	-3.11	-1.72	1.35	5.90
13	-6.65	-5.22	-4.68	-4.32	-25.97	-4.19	-3.02	-0.42	3.42
14	-3.39	-3.27	-2.65	-2.36	-32.49	-2.19	-0.73	2.52	7.33
15	-5.41	-4.44	-3.76	-3.57	-31.75	-3.41	-1.98	1.19	5.90
16	-5.38	-4.37	-3.21	-3.37	-41.18	-3.17	-1.31	2.81	8.91
<i>Total energies; <math>n(CO_2) = (CO_2)_n</math></i>									
2, C <sub>2h</sub>	-1.47	-1.28	-0.88	-0.65	-18.13	-0.56	0.26	2.07	4.76
3, C <sub>3h</sub>	-4.08	-3.45	-2.59	-1.94	-42.73	-1.72	0.20	4.47	10.81
4, C <sub>2</sub>	-7.96	-6.78	-5.33	-4.37	-67.75	-4.03	-0.98	5.79	15.83
5, C <sub>1</sub>	-12.08	-10.17	-7.92	-6.83	-103.60	-6.32	-1.65	8.70	24.05
6, S <sub>6</sub>	-16.35	-13.63	-10.69	-9.28	-137.20	-8.60	-2.42	11.30	31.62
7	-21.08	-17.71	-14.01	-12.49	-166.18	-11.66	-4.18	12.44	37.06
8	-25.38	-21.29	-16.94	-15.15	-196.20	-14.17	-5.34	14.28	43.34
9	-30.03	-25.10	-20.17	-18.04	-224.85	-16.92	-6.80	15.68	49.00
10	-34.51	-28.81	-23.27	-20.86	-256.01	-19.58	-8.06	17.54	55.47
11	-39.51	-32.88	-26.41	-23.90	-288.22	-22.46	-9.49	19.33	62.03
12	-44.79	-37.14	-29.88	-27.16	-318.94	-25.57	-11.22	20.68	67.93
13	-51.43	-42.36	-34.56	-31.48	-344.91	-29.76	-14.23	20.26	71.36
14	-54.83	-45.63	-37.21	-33.84	-377.40	-31.95	-14.97	22.77	78.69
15	-60.24	-50.07	-40.97	-37.41	-409.15	-35.36	-16.95	23.97	84.58
16	-65.62	-54.44	-44.18	-40.78	-450.33	-38.53	-18.26	26.77	93.49

<sup>a</sup> Electronic binding energy.

<sup>b</sup> CP corrected electronic binding energy.

<sup>c</sup> CP and ZPE corrected electronic binding energy.



**Figure 2.** M06-2X/aug-cc-pVDZ stepwise energy changes associated with the growth of small carbon dioxide clusters; values of  $\Delta H_{n-1,n}$ ,  $T\Delta S_{n-1,n}$  and  $\Delta G_{n-1,n}$  correspond to the stepwise enthalpy, temperature-weighted entropy and temperature-dependent free energy change, respectively.

ory. M06-2X predictions of  $(CO_2)_2$  and  $(CO_2)_3$  cluster structures reveal only slightly shorter intermolecular distances. As for  $(CO_2)_2$  and  $(CO_2)_3$  binding energies, B2PLYP-D values tend to be underbound relative to CCSD(T) results, while the M06-2X approach provides binding energies that are consistently closer to the coupled cluster benchmark energies. Thus, M06-2X in combination with aug-cc-pVDZ offers a satisfactory description of the interactions among molecules in  $CO_2$  clusters and can therefore be extended to significantly larger systems than accessible with B2PLYP-D, MP2 or CCSD(T) methods. The calculated  $CO_2$  clustering enthalpies and entropies predict that the formation of  $(CO_2)_n$  with  $n = 2-16$  is unfavorable at 298 K, however, at lower temperatures ( $T < 150$  K) the magic cluster  $n = 13$  will form, and starting at around  $T = 100$  K, clustering free energies for  $n = 6-16$  shift to negative values, suggesting that  $(CO_2)_n$  cluster growth is increasingly favorable with decreasing temperature. In general, the M06-2X approach provides a more accurate description of weakly bound carbon dioxide clusters, and thus may achieve high accuracy energies for larger clusters at a fraction of the cost of B2PLYP-D. This cost factor will become more significant for larger clusters because B2PLYP-D scales as  $N^5$  whereas M06-2X scales as  $N^3$ .

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cplett.2013.04.044>.

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