

Comments by Appalachian Mountain Club on the Framework for a Draft Regional Policy Proposal Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is the nation's oldest outdoor recreation and conservation organization with more than 100,000 members from Maine to Washington, DC. We're dedicated to promoting the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Our region's current transportation infrastructure and dependence on fossil fuels results in significant air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that impact the enjoyment and safety of outdoor recreationists and the vitality of the natural and recreational resources AMC works to protect. We strongly support the approach laid out in the Transportation and Climate Initiative's *Framework for a Draft Regional Policy Proposal*. As with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) we believe that the cap and invest system works, and that a well-planned TCI program can achieve the important goal of reducing carbon emissions from the mobile source sector while ensuring equitable and accessible transportation across our region. AMC joined the Nov. 5th, 2019 comments submitted by Our Transportation Future and others, and we offer these additional specific comments regarding bike and pedestrian pathways and rural community challenges.



Equity and Active Transportation

AMC strongly endorses the TCI jurisdiction's goals around equity, environmental justice, inclusion, and meaningful public participation, and the shared recognition of the historical inequities of accessibility, mobility, affordability, public health risks that now also include a disproportionate vulnerability to our changing climate. We are attuned to the significant differences in the needs of urban, rural, and suburban communities, as we work in them all. We strongly support increased and well-connected systems of bike and pedestrian paths as a low-cost low-carbon approach for mobility and to reduce the reliance on personal vehicles to reach work, services and businesses, and as an essential feature of strong communities to connect with each other and the outdoors. AMC encourages outdoor connections for everyone in our region's more remote mountains and forests, and also in urban and suburban centers. We are leading projects such as the Bay Circuit Trail, a 230+ mile trail and greenway that crosses 37 towns in greater Boston and overlays with community trails, bike paths, and commuter rail stations. We also instigated and continue to create the Pennsylvania Highland Trail Network, which connects existing and new recreational trails across a variety of landscapes in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from mobile sources in urban areas by expanding bike and pedestrian paths will have the co-benefit of reducing ozone and fine particulates, creating a healthier outdoor environment.



Rural Areas and Connectivity

We urge the inclusion of active transportation infrastructure in suburban and rural communities' transit planning as part of the investment of proceeds and complementary policies. Bike and pedestrian paths can facilitate connectivity between destinations and transit hubs in addition to direct routes to work, services, and as a recreational network. A prime example is the heavily used Minuteman Commuter Bikeway in Massachusetts. Traversing 10 miles through the towns of Bedford, Lexington, Arlington and Cambridge, and connecting to the Alewife T Station in Cambridge, the bikeway provides an easy way for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel to and from subway and bus lines, mitigating automobile traffic and associated emissions in the area from what would otherwise be. Expanding multi-use trail connections to existing core routes, especially in overburdened communities, would enhance non-vehicular mobility to a wider range of destinations and services.

Many rural areas in the TCI region are experiencing a boom in their outdoor recreation economies, and some more remote recreation destinations are being overrun with outdoor enthusiasts (Franconia Notch in New Hampshire is but one example).

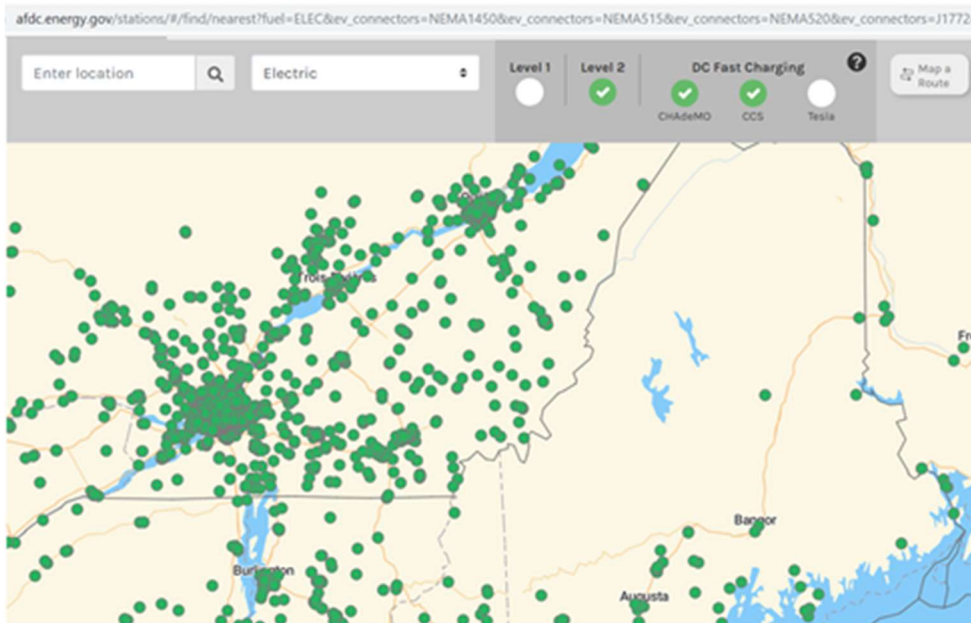
Expanding mass transit to some of these destinations, as well as looking at active transportation possibilities for recreation and connectivity, could reduce emissions and alleviate the overcrowding, spurring growth in local businesses and economies as well.

Another need in rural communities is EV infrastructure. As we encourage the growing EV market we need to be sure that rural recreational economies are not left behind



because they are less accessible by EV. The lack of EV level 2 and DC Fast Charging stations in northern NH and Maine, seen in Figure 1, demonstrate the current disparity.

Figure 1. US Dept. of Energy's Alternative Fueling Station Locator for northern areas of NH and Maine showing a lack of Level 2 and DC Fast Charging stations.



Complementary Policies

We are encouraged that TCI states recognize the importance of coordination with complementary programs and policies to reduce transportation GHG emissions. The TCI jurisdictions should coordinate with established state Offices of Recreation in NH, VT, ME, VA and MA and state task forces in VT and MD, to ensure planning of bike and pedestrian pathways and other active transportation infrastructure are integrated with regional and state-wide comprehensive recreation planning efforts, smart zoning, and other planning efforts to improve community resiliency, mobility, and safety.



The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report issued in October 2018, makes very clear that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is crucial if we are to avert climate disaster. The report finds that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050. The urgency could not be clearer, and the need for a strong and robust approach to reducing carbon emissions from the transportation sector has never been more timely or important.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Georgia Murray

Staff Scientist

Appalachian Mountain Club