

New Jersey TCI Coalition Comments

February 28, 2020

Thank you for your leadership on and prioritization of improving New Jersey's air quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and modernizing transportation. As a heavily populated state whose residents primarily rely on single-occupancy vehicles to get around, we applaud your administration's pledge to reduce our environmental impact and improve our transportation system—especially your commitment to participate in the development of the regional cap and invest policy being proposed by the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI). We appreciate the staff from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation's continued participation in this regional effort, you for dedicating resources to this endeavor, and that continuing to work on TCI is one of the Energy Master Plan recommendations. We, the undersigned groups, write to respectfully request that the State of New Jersey take a leadership role in the development of TCI, sign on to the final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for states that are part of the initiative, and meet with us to discuss this important initiative.

In the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, we have regional transportation challenges that require regional policy responses. New Jersey is a corridor state with many drivers passing through on our roads, leaving their pollution behind for our communities to bear. Your leadership is needed to ensure that our state has a place in this regional conversation that has the potential to not only improve our collective health and commutes, but also help New Jersey reach the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals required by the Global Warming Response Act statute.

In December 2019, after several years of intensive work to gather public input, conduct modeling and develop a policy framework, TCI states released a draft MOU that outlines a regional cap-and-invest program that could reduce transportation emissions by up to 25 percent from 2022 levels by 2032. The cap and invest program would push polluters to pay their fair share while reducing our long-term reliance on fossil fuels. According to the Sierra Club, TCI could generate as much as \$775 million for New Jersey to reinvest annually for investment in clean transportation. That money could be spent on capital improvements for New Jersey Transit, to support the implementation of Complete and Green Streets policies, improve air quality for New Jersey residents, especially those in environmental justice communities, and to accelerate the deployment of electric vehicle infrastructure. Thanks to your visionary leadership, New Jersey has passed and will now implement one of the strongest electric vehicle and charging infrastructure policies in the nation. To fully realize the potential of that law and drive the investment necessary to modernize our transportation system, there needs to be a reliable, cost-effective source of funding.

TCI is a potential funding mechanism to finance projects, including the purchase of electric buses, electrification of bus depots, continuation of electric vehicle rebates, and supporting the charging infrastructure ramp-up that the law requires. Because states are in the driver's seat to determine where these funds should go, no matter how we get around, TCI opens opportunities for us to have a more affordable, accessible, faster, cleaner, and greener commute with fewer carbon emissions.

To that extent, continued participation with our neighbor states in a carefully crafted cap and invest program provides New Jersey the unique and important opportunity to improve the lives of frontline communities who have borne much of the burden of our dirty, failing transportation systems. Investing all revenue in transit equity and emission reductions would ensure that the benefits of the program reaches all communities in New Jersey, particularly low-income, overburdened and environmental

justice communities. We encourage you to leverage your participation in the program and ensure it is consistent with the policies you have set forth in NJ, and include a strong cap consistent with a 45% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, as recommended by the IPCC and in line with the overwhelming scientific consensus. A well-structured program must unequivocally lead to significant emission reductions in environmental justice communities, while also ensuring that these communities receive the benefits of more transportation options and access to well-paying jobs that come with our state's move to a clean transportation economy. With these principles in the forefront, and through continued engagement with all stakeholders, a strong cap and invest regional program that brings great benefits to New Jersey can be achieved.

Polls show that residents agree with and support the TCI concept. The Nature Conservancy's poll of rural New Jersey residents showed 80 percent approval for the program, many of whom cited saving the environment as their main reason for support. More broadly, a [MassInc poll](#) showed 67 percent support among New Jersey residents, exhibiting majority support for the program. The poll also indicated that support was higher among younger people, women, and people of color, demonstrating a broad diversity of support for TCI.

Later this year, New Jersey will have an opportunity to sign the MOU and join our state with our neighbors to create a program that benefits all of our commutes and health. We ask that between now and then, you and your staff take a leadership stance and be vocal proponents of a strong cap and invest program framework that will improve our air quality and reduce New Jersey residents' reliance on polluting vehicles. And when you are asked, sign the MOU.

We support your continued and increased involvement in developing TCI, and our organizations are available to assist in any way as the process continues. Again, thank you for your participation and kind attention to this request and demonstrating your commitment to expanding our clean energy economy, and help make New Jersey the greenest state in the country.

Sincerely,

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