

February 24, 2020

Gov. Phil Scott and Other Transportation & Climate Initiative Principals:

As co-chairs of the Vermont Legislative Climate Solutions Caucus, we encourage you, collectively, to continue crafting an ambitious and equitable plan to modernize the region's transportation systems. Further, we urge Governor Scott to formally join the Transportation & Climate Initiative (TCI) in order to reap its many economic, environmental and equity benefits.

The Climate Solutions Caucus is dedicated to advancing cost-effective and equitable energy policies to transition Vermont to a sustainable future. We are the largest issue caucus in the Vermont State House and we believe:

- Climate solutions stimulate good jobs, generate sustainable economic growth, contribute to a healthy environment, and foster resilient communities;
- A just transition to the clean energy future must be equitable: the costs and benefits must be distributed fairly, according to each Vermonter's ability to contribute and benefit;
- All voices must be represented in our solutions, especially those most impacted; and
- Solutions should be data driven and founded on evidence-based research.

These fundamental principles are not dissimilar to those Gov. Scott proposed in his Executive Order creating the Vermont Climate Action Commission¹, which said:

- Solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions must spur economic activity, inspire and grow Vermont businesses, and put Vermonters on a path to affordability;
- The development of solutions must engage all Vermonters, so no individual or group of Vermonters is unduly burdened; and
- Programs developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions must collectively provide solutions for all Vermonters to reduce their carbon impact and save money.

The Transportation & Climate Initiative development process and design have met the criteria of both the Climate Solutions Caucus and the governor.

TCI is modeled on the successful Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) that, for more than a decade, has driven emissions reductions across the region while providing resources to weatherize approximately 9,950 households and 564 businesses in Vermont.² Economic growth in the RGGI states has outpaced that of states outside the compact, and the health benefits of reduced air pollution can be measured in billions of dollars of medical costs and hundreds of premature deaths avoided.^{3,4}

The takeaway from RGGI is simple: Climate action saves lives and money.

¹ [State of Vermont, Executive Order No. 12-17](#)

² [The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, The Investment of RGGI Proceeds in 2017 \(Published October 2019\)](#)

³ [Acadia Center, The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative: Ten Years in Review](#)

⁴ [Abt Associates, Analysis of the Public Health Impacts of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#)

Taking a page from the RGGI experience, the TCI program design process has been inclusive and allowed stakeholders to participate via interactive webinars, online comments, and at in-person meetings across the state.⁵ In addition, the Climate Solutions Caucus held twenty public forums, attended by over 1,000 Vermonters, to discuss TCI and other climate priorities in the Fall of 2019.⁶ The program has also been supported by extensive research and economic modeling by some of the same firms that the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office retains for its expert analysis.⁷

Two of the interesting findings discussed at the Administration's public forums in St. Johnsbury, Manchester Center, Springfield and Burlington are that Vermonters will most likely pay TCI's compliance costs whether or not Gov. Scott opts to have us join the initiative. And, that if Vermont does join, the State will receive back more for investments than Vermonters contribute. These findings alone make it essential that Vermont joins TCI.

We believe that Vermonters are ready to embrace the regional cap-and-invest approach to carbon pollution reductions and are backed up by a recent survey by Public Policy Polling (PPP) which found that 75% of Vermonters support the TCI concept.⁸

For all these reasons and more we encourage Vermont to sign onto this regional approach to addressing the climate impact of transportation. And we are ready and eager to work with the administration on designing the program. The sooner we can describe what benefits Vermonters will see from TCI the stronger public support will become.

Sincerely,

Rep. Sarah Copeland-Hanzas

Sen. Christopher Pearson

⁵ [Scott Administration TCI portal](#)

⁶ [VPIRG, Climate Solutions Caucus Holding Forums Statewide](#)

⁷ [TCI, initial projections of potential economic and public health benefits](#)

⁸ [Vermont Conservation Voters and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, December 2019](#)