

December 21, 2020

The Nature Conservancy (The Conservancy or TNC) respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) in anticipation of the release of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining states' commitment to the program. In short, we seek to raise several issues regarding transportation and environmental equity that we would like to see you address as part of TCI, within the MOU and in implementation within each individual jurisdiction.

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries and territories: 38 by direct conservation impact and 34 through partners, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

TNC is committed to reducing emissions from the transportation sector. We believe TCI can be part of the solution set to addressing transportation emissions. We believe that TCI offers a unique platform through which states are encouraged to work together to address transportation emissions that impact public health at a regional scale while developing a new model for supporting investments in clean transportation, one that is not tied to traditional transportation funding mechanisms or formulas that have historically favored road construction and driven emissions higher.

At the same time, we acknowledge that TCI has limitations and that states have much to do to reduce inequities in their transportation networks, both related to transportation access and environmental justice. For that reason, we offer the following comments on your approach to addressing equity concerns within TCI:

1. **The participating states should give equal weight within TCI to policies that promote equitable outcomes.** The purpose of TCI is to achieve a number of positive environmental, transportation, and economic outcomes. We need a suite of policy actions to achieve the multiple goals of TCI. TNC believes that policy measures that support clean transportation and more equitable outcomes for specific communities affected by transportation pollution in each state should be central pillars of TCI, rather than being considered supplemental or complementary to the cap-and-invest mechanism.
2. **The participating states should affirm and strengthen their commitments to an equitable process for TCI going forward.** We urge states to make a stronger effort towards genuine engagement with a diverse set of communities, both urban and rural, up front rather than try to address equity after making policy decisions. The equity commitments that you have made to date are a first step, but just a first step. We encourage you to build off of those initial commitments in the following ways:
 - a. We encourage states to treat the requirement that 35 percent of revenues be spent in communities that have been underserved or overburdened by pollution as floor, not a ceiling.

- b.** We encourage states to begin now, rather than after program implementation begins, public discussion of how to design strong, inclusive Equity Advisory Bodies program transparency measures, and investment decision criteria.
- c.** We recommend that states consult with the environmental justice and frontline community groups in your individual states when developing or adopting the types of transportation policies referenced in the previous bullet to ensure that specific community needs are being met rather than simply adopting a one-size-fits all set of policies across the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. We look forward to seeing these principles in action not only in the final MOU, but also as you develop the model rule and in TCI implementation plans. We believe that, working with a diverse group of transportation, environmental, and community partners and stakeholders, you can lay the groundwork for a cleaner and more equitable transportation network across the TCI region.

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