

Testimony on Climate Change and Rural Transportation

My primary point regarding a potential carbon tax on transport fuels is that it's essentially a regressive tax levied against those who can least afford it. As you know all too well, NEK residents typically earn less than Vermonters in other parts of the state, which of course means that an increase in fuel prices hit us disproportionately hard. Additionally, because our local employment options are somewhat limited, we are often compelled to commute long distances for work. This only exacerbates the impact of increased fuel prices.

I'd also like to point out that well-intentioned initiatives such as incentives for EV purchases are often perceived by NEK residents as being unhelpful and tone deaf. That's because a \$5k incentive on a \$35k car still means that car is about \$25k more than we can afford on a good day (and which may not offer the driving range we need, anyway).

If the state were truly interested in addressing our climate crisis in an equitable manner that does not place undue burden on Vermont's rural working class, nor unfairly incentivizes vehicle purchases that the majority of NEK residents cannot afford, it would instead be looking for ways to help these drivers maintain the cars they already have, thus extending their lifespan, and achieving carbon reductions the good ole fashioned way: By maximizing the return on the embodied energy in every car that's ever made. And rather than incentivize the purchase of electric cars that are unaffordable and impractical for many, it would consider an incentive program that encouraged NEK residents to purchase more efficient, used cars, This would reduce emissions considerably, while helping ensure the financial stability of our most vulnerable residents.

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