

Transportation for Vermonters

AARP VT • American Heart Association • American Lung Association in Vermont • CarShare Vermont • Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association • Local Motion • Renewable Energy Vermont • Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club • Vermont Clean Cities Coalition • Vermont Energy Investment Corporation • Vermont Natural Resources Council • Vermont Public Interest Research Group

April 18, 2019

Dear Chair Kitchel and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

Transportation for Vermonters is a diverse coalition of environmental, human services, public health, climate, and transportation advocates committed to working together, across sectors, to achieve a sustainable, accessible, and equitable transportation system for Vermont.

We see investments in electric and other highly efficient vehicles as one way to provide Vermonters with transportation choices that help the environment, communities, and public health.

We write today in strong support of investing in a program to incentivize the purchase of new and used electric, plug in hybrid electric, and hybrid vehicles, with a focus on supporting Vermonters with low and moderate incomes.

While we respectfully urge the committee to use the full \$4.5 million that came to the state from two successful consumer fraud settlements with auto manufacturers, we recommend that any dollars invested in electric vehicles take clear steps to serve Vermonters most in need of financial support. Specifically, we wish to express our strong support for creating a program that would allocate a portion of the funding specifically for a program targeted to Vermonters with low incomes. This would be a holistic program that provides electric, plug-in hybrid electric, and hybrid vehicle purchase incentives (including used vehicle options), as well as vehicle purchase guidance.

This program will bring many benefits, including:

- *Transportation choice and affordability:* Investing in electric and hybrid vehicles helps reduce vehicle operating costs, since these vehicles cost less to fuel and maintain, which can help reduce overall transportation costs. Even in our most compactly developed county, Chittenden, the typical Vermont household is still spending an estimated 21% of their income on transportation – when 15% is considered the threshold for

transportation affordability.¹ (In Franklin County it's about 24.5%; in Grand Isle, it's nearly 26%.)

- *Reliable and clean transportation choices:* Reliable transportation options help people participate in the workforce, access school and child care, and stay connected to others.
- *Greenhouse gas emission reductions:* Given that transportation is our state's biggest challenge when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we need concerted investment in lower emissions vehicles, as well as other transportation choices, to change this trend.
- *Inclusive program design:* The proposed structure of the EV incentive program ensures that people with a range of incomes can participate.
- *Successful car purchasing and ownership:* The process of purchasing a car – and especially the process of identifying an affordable vehicle and obtaining fair financing – is a challenging one. Establishing a comprehensive program to support vehicle purchase and maintenance will help ensure the success of the low-income purchase incentive.

As we noted above, it is our hope that the State of Vermont establishes a strong program by investing the full \$4.5 million that came from automobile settlements into an incentive program as described above. A significant investment would catalyze uptake of this new technology, and would serve the growing number of Vermonters of all income levels interested in access to cleaner, more efficient vehicles.

While shifting to a more sustainable transportation system is a long-term endeavor – one that ultimately must involve changes to how our communities are built, as well as technology – this is a near-term step we can take to help all Vermonters get into cleaner vehicles. We strongly urge you to support this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact us with questions.

Sincerely,

Transportation for Vermonters

¹ See <http://map.ccrpcvt.org/LocationAffordability/>, which is based on research into transportation affordability conducted jointly by AARP-VT, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, VEIC, VNRC, and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.