

Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT)

AARP VT • American Lung Association in Vermont • CarShare Vermont • Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association • Green Mountain Transit • Local Motion • Renewable Energy Vermont • Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility • Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club • Vermont Clean Cities Coalition • Vermont Energy Education Program • Vermont Energy Investment Corporation • Vermont Natural Resources Council • Vermont Public Interest Research Group

Feb 22, 2022

Chair Mazza and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

On behalf of the [Transportation for Vermonters](#) (T4VT) coalition, thank you for the invitation to share our [2022 policy agenda](#) and priorities. T4VT is a cross sector advocacy coalition working to create a sustainable, accessible transportation system for our rural state.

We have 13 *member* organizations: AARP, CarShare Vermont, CATMA, Green Mountain Transit, Local Motion, Renewable Energy Vermont, the Sierra Club, Vermont Clean Cities Coalition, Vermont Environmental Education Program, VEIC, VNRC, VPIRG, and Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility. We also have *affiliates* who advise us on policy, including the Vermont Center for Independent Living, Vermont Council on Rural Development, Energy Action Network, and Capstone Community Action. The diversity of this group starts to give you a sense of how we think about transportation.

We formed because even though we are doing a lot as a state – from our complete streets policy, to helpful VTrans policies and investments, to strong smart growth policies – we are still falling short in a number of areas related to transportation.

- In terms of *affordability*: Transportation is the second largest household expense after housing;
- In terms of *access*: People without cars are hard pressed to access jobs, medical care, and social activities, and can have limited opportunities as a result.
- And *energy*, for example: 40% of our GHG emissions come from transportation - the most significant source of emissions in Vermont.

As a coalition, we believe that we can start to shift our transportation system so that it addresses environmental goals, boosts our individual and collective economic success, and creates stronger communities.

With the passage of the Vermont Climate Action Plan, the on-going impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and unprecedented incoming federal funding, Vermont has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make significant progress toward achieving the wide-ranging benefits of a sustainable transportation system. To succeed, we must commit and prioritize incoming federal funding to pay for clean transportation infrastructure and innovative programs that focus on reducing emissions and ensuring equitable access to mobility options for all Vermonters.

Specifically, we must:

Reduce Barriers to Electric Vehicle (EV) Adoption

- The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) must be rapidly accelerated to reduce carbon emissions and avoid the most dire effects of climate disruptions.
- To do so, EVs must be as financially and logistically accessible as possible: funding for EV purchase incentives, vehicle replacement programs, and EV charging station grant programs must be increased to better serve low-income and BIPOC Vermonters.
- Current EV incentive programs should also be expanded to allow municipalities, non-profit organizations, and businesses to participate and transition vehicle fleets.

Commit to Long-Term Funding for Sustainable Transportation and Align Budgets with Priorities

- Without long-term, dedicated funding for non-single occupancy vehicle and public transportation infrastructure, amenities and initiatives, Vermont will continue to struggle to meet its social, environmental and economic goals.
- Recognizing that existing revenue streams are declining as projects with ever-increasing costs are demanded, new and innovative funding is needed.
- T4VT supports an equitably implemented Transportation and Climate Initiative program (TCI-P), when regionally viable, or a commensurate approach to provide sustainable funding for efficient transportation options.
- Incorporating screens for state budgets, including for the Transportation Bill, can help to ensure funds are appropriated to support state climate and equity policy.
- We must also disincentive high emission vehicles and incentivize those with low emissions by implementing a new-vehicle efficiency price adjuster; doing so in a way that mitigates potential impacts on rural and low-income purchasers is key.

Expand Transportation Options to Reduce Dependence on Single-Occupancy, Internal Combustion Vehicles and to Better Serve All Vermonters

- Historically, state transportation dollars have been spent on traditional expenses like roads and bridges. But to increase and improve multimodal mobility options [to achieve all the benefits described above], we must make substantial and sustained investment in a range of infrastructure and programs that support local action and accessible transportation alternatives. Several of the key policies T4VT supports include:
- Investments in active transportation (e.g. biking, walking and other micromobility modes) infrastructure must be maintained and expanded.
- As we look to solutions for our more rural communities and to make transportation alternatives as easy and accessible as possible for Vermonters, we must invest in shared mobility (e.g. public and micro-transit, carshare, and more).
 - We support making fare-free transit permanent, as it not only reduces the financial burden on those who rely on transit, but it also optimizes service and will help to rebuild ridership.
 - Workforce development is key to avoiding reductions and inconsistencies in service.
 - Funding for innovative efforts like MyRide in Montpelier will help to improve first/last mile challenges, and improve transit efficiencies.

- We support exploring the sustainable funding options provided in the 2021 Transit Funding Study from CCRPC and GMT.
- Requiring large employers to Integrate transportation demand management (TDM) planning programs is another useful tool at our disposal.
 - Employer-supported options like telecommuting and carpooling are easy, low/no-cost solutions.
 - Funding for the Mobility and Transportation Innovations Grant Program should be increased to \$10M to incentivize innovative strategies.
- We must also take advantage of our existing rail infrastructure, and plan for and invest in improvements to increase commuter, long-distance passenger and commercial rail use.

Support Downtowns, Villages, and Compact Community Centers

- Compact community centers where housing, jobs, schools, and services are closer together allow for more transportation options like public transit, walk/bike infrastructure, and EV charging station, and reduced energy usage overall.
 - To support smart growth development, we must continue to provide financial and technical support for state-designated downtowns and village centers, including for their implementation of Complete Streets policies.
- The Vermont State Road Design Standards are long overdue for an update to ensure complete streets that safely accommodate all users and transportation modes, and meet our Smart Growth and Climate Action Plan goals.
- Finally, incoming federal recovery and infrastructure funds should be directed to the most impactful actions, including funding for water and sewer infrastructure in compact centers to increase housing development and transportation options.

T4VT is available as a coalition to provide testimony, so please keep us in mind if we can provide information that would help your policy making. Thank you for your work and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kati Gallagher

Coordinator, Transportation for Vermonters
Sustainable Communities Program Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council

Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT) 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.

