

February 21, 2025

House Committee on Transportation
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Dear Chair Walker and Members of the House Committee on Transportation,

The undersigned organizations write to you today to respectfully request that the House Committee on Transportation recommend that the House Committee on Appropriations continue funding critical cost-saving climate policy. It is imperative Vermont make the following investments – knowing that delays in our work to increase energy affordability, decrease climate pollution and improve Vermont’s resilience to climate-fueled disasters will cost our state today and even more tomorrow.

Low- and Moderate-Income Electric Vehicle Incentives

In 2019, the Vermont Legislature created an incentive to help low- and moderate-income Vermonters purchase electric vehicles. The legislature also subsequently authorized and funded MileageSmart, an incredibly successful, equity-focused program run by Capstone Community Action that provides incentives to help low-income Vermonters purchase used EVs and other use high-efficiency vehicles. The legislature also supported Replace Your Ride, which allows low-income Vermonters to trade in an older gas or diesel vehicle for funding for an EV or other form of clean transportation. After several rounds of one-time funding, in 2024, funding for all three programs ran out abruptly in October. These incentives have helped thousands of lower income-earning Vermonters across the state transition to clean, more affordable and more efficient transportation. To ensure that the green transition is accessible and just, we urge you to recommend that \$14,000,000 be provided to fund these three programs, which would enable them to run for a full fiscal year at the pace they had been utilized at over the course of 2024 up until funding ran out.

It is also critical that we ensure Vermonters are aware of these incentives. To that end, supporting Drive Electric Vermont's marketing initiatives with their request of \$500,000 is vital to ensuring that our communities are building awareness and momentum for the changing car market.

Public Transit Funding

Public transit in our state also faces a funding cliff that will harm Vermonters. Some Vermonters have already lost transportation to work, medical services, grocery stores, and other critical services - and hundreds more are at risk with more route cuts planned. Green Mountain Transit, the state's largest provider of public transportation, is facing the need to cut back on dozens of routes across the five counties they serve - and Vermont's rural transit providers aren't far behind.

The Committees on Transportation have heard testimony on a report that plans to separate the rural and urban routes, allocating these rural service areas to other providers. However, this would not happen until July 1, 2026, assuming the Legislature moves forward with this proposal during the current session. Even if that plan is approved, communities in Franklin, Chittenden, and

Washington Counties would experience the planned route reductions in the meantime. To prevent this from occurring, GMT would require an additional \$500,000 to maintain services through the end of FY26. To restore services that have already been cut, GMT would require an additional \$700,000 on top of the \$500,000 required to prevent additional service reductions. Both of these amounts would be required on top of the Governor's proposal for GMT funding.

Addressing the climate crisis and maintaining economic stability requires thoughtful investments that protect Vermonters from rising costs, strengthen our communities, and safeguard our shared future. The challenges we face—ranging from increasing climate-related disasters to the need for accessible and reliable transportation—demand collaboration, innovation, and long-term planning. They also demand a sustained commitment to avoid costly inefficiencies and frustration from the starting and stopping of key programs for Vermonters, critical partners (like auto dealers) and state agency staff. Our organizations look forward to working with you to advance these efforts and build a resilient, thriving Vermont for all, and we sincerely thank you for your consideration of these essential investments.

Sincerely,

Conservation Law Foundation
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vermont Public Interest Research Group