

Testimony on H.863

Dear Members of the House Transportation Committee,

Hello my name is Catherine Crawley. I'm a resident of Lamoille County, in Stowe, and I serve as Chair of the Town of Stowe Energy Committee. I also work for the Vermont Arts Council as the Communications Director.

Please accept this written testimony in support of the transportation bill, H.863.

I would like to share my experience as a resident, as an Energy Committee member for the Town of Stowe, and as an employee of a statewide organization.

First, the context: As you know, transportation continues to be a significant portion of people's household energy costs in Vermont. In fact, transportation is the second largest annual expense for most households, surpassed only by housing costs. Vermonters drive more miles per capita than residents of any other state in the Northeast due to our state's rural nature and low population density.

With an EV, your dollar goes farther. Combined with maintenance savings, the lower fuel costs of EVs typically result in \$6,000–\$10,000 lower lifetime costs compared to gas vehicles, even without any EV purchase incentives, according to the recent Energy Action Network's annual report.

Replacing gas and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles is one of the most significant actions to reduce climate pollution that Vermonters can take. While EVs are responsible for more GHG emissions during the manufacturing phase due to battery production, gasoline cars have much higher emissions over the full life of the vehicle.

This bill also gives Vermonters options for transportation beyond vehicles, such as public transit, and bike and pedestrian solutions. Having options other than vehicles is important to ensure a more equitable transportation system and provides public health and other benefits.

Given clean energy policy, regulatory, and funding rollbacks at the federal level, state leadership is necessary to continue moving solutions forward to reduce energy costs and cut climate pollution.

I live in Lamoille County which ranks #3 nationally for climate-related federal disaster declarations. Like many other parts of Vermont, we have faced extreme rainfall, powerful storms, and drought. We're about to head into a new El Niño

weather pattern, which is estimated to hit this year sometime between June and September. This new hot phase will set new global weather temperature records and is sure to supercharge rainfall here in Vermont, among other weather-related carnage.

My experience.

I leased my EV from Montpelier VW in April of 2024. For the first six months, I did not have a home charger and relied on the network of chargers here in Vermont. I work for a statewide organization at the Vermont Arts Council, so I spend some of my time on the road visiting the various organizations and enterprises that comprise Vermont's creative sector. So it's crucial that when I pull up to a charger, I can rely on it to work. Last year I was in Manchester, about a two-hour drive from my home in Stowe. I found a great bank of chargers behind a municipal building, but I had to try several of them to get them to work. At one point, I had to call the service number on the charger in order to reset the machine and wait for it to reboot. To be fair, problems with machines aren't always the fault of the municipality, but if we had a more reliable, consistent network of chargers statewide, we would have a greater chance at success when we pull up to a charger. Which is why I am so supportive of the provision in H.863 related to the [EV charging accountability and \(pricing\) transparency](#). Anything we can do cost-effectively do that eliminates the anxiety and challenges of finding charging far from home/on the road is key. This provision would help EV drivers by enabling them to use a credit card to pay at the charger (instead of downloading, registering with, and consulting several different proprietary apps that may not even be accessible in rural VT -- which often lacks service and internet connectivity). But even then, the apps do not always provide transparent, real-time information about whether a charger is working, whether it is in-use, or how much it will cost. H.863 would change that and provide a necessary layer of pricing transparency and assurance to people looking to charge.

While we solve for things for people traveling far from home, it's also important to make it easier and affordable to help people charge at home. After about six months of charging away from home, I knew it was time to invest in a charger at home – but I knew that it would come at great cost, that I would have to spend a lot of money upgrading my electrical panel. Fortunately, at that time, I heard about a terrific rebate from Efficiency Vermont that would qualify me to cover 90% of the cost of the upgrade – so I immediately took advantage of that. And I am ever grateful to Efficiency Vermont for providing the support and enabling me to make the necessary changes at home.

A friend in Stowe who also leased an EV about a year before me eventually had to give hers up. She lived in a condo and was unable to get a charger for her multiple

housing residence. She reluctantly went back to gas. However, she likely would have stayed in her EV if a more robust network of chargers had been available or the condo association could have been able to get support to install chargers. Which is why I support the Right-to-Charge provision for condo and homeowners associations of H.863 – and I hope you will too.

Which brings me to the work of the Town of Stowe Energy Committee. Recognizing the value of EV chargers to the town, its residents and businesses, and visitors, the Committee has worked hard to explore every avenue for expanding our EV charging network. We have been able to do this through state grants and by partnering with our local utility, Stowe Electric. We were able to save a Level 3 Fast Charger that had been at The Alchemist brewery for many years and which was about to be mothballed. This was a Level 3 Fast Charger, which we moved with the help of Stowe Electric to a municipal owned parking lot. We were also recently granted \$19,000 from the Charge Vermont state program to move another decommissioned charger (this one from a hotel) to a municipal parking lot served by Stowe Elementary school and the Town Rec Department.

In addition:

- We worked with Vermont Clean Cities Coalition to develop an Electric Vehicle Readiness and Charging Roadmap for the Town.
- The Committee also entered into an agreement to utilize the national Charging Smart program, a free technical assistance program for encouraging EVs and chargers in communities.
- And our student members researched how to electrify our police fleet.

As the federal government abdicates its responsibility to protect the nation from the ravages of the climate crisis, it is up to us as a state to be creative and do everything we can to institute low-cost policies that speed up EV adoption and give communities – and Vermonters – greater access to transit and other non vehicular solutions. In doing so, more Vermonters can reap the cost savings that cleaner transportation provides. Ongoing state action – in partnership with so many supportive communities, including us town energy committees – is so pivotal in this moment to help address actual energy affordability and the increasingly costly and consequential climate crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill and in advance for advancing its important policy provisions.

Catherine Crawley
Stowe