



Dear Chair Walker and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

The Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) is very concerned about the state of the Transportation Fund. As you know, traditional funding sources are in decline, as the need for infrastructure improvements and critical services, like public transit, are only growing.

Transportation is the second largest household cost for Vermonters and represents the largest share of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, at about 40%. At a time when fuel costs are unpredictable and likely to remain high, pulling back from investments in cleaner mobility options leaves Vermonters even more exposed to these rising costs rather than providing more stable and affordable transportation choices.

To help Vermonters cut costs, reduce climate pollution, and create vibrant, connected communities, we must prioritize investments in a robust, efficient statewide mobility system - and identify sustainable, long-term revenue sources to pay for it.

We want to thank the Committee for supporting the **re-alignment of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants to prioritize biking, walking, and Safe Routes to Schools projects**. Funding for walking and biking improves safety and equitable access to daily needs while reducing pollution and supporting connected and vibrant community centers.

As the Committee works to finalize the T-bill, we urge you to include the following proposals:

Increased Options for Local Revenue:

- **Allow municipalities to increase the amount raised through a Local Option Tax to support local transportation needs.**
 - *Expanding the LOT percentage that towns can assess to up to 2% on the existing categories would give municipalities a pathway to raise additional revenue for critical services, such as transportation; this could be particularly helpful as VTrans delays projects and the state faces a tight fiscal year and decreasing federal revenue.*
 - *VNRC supports municipalities keeping the majority of the revenue raised from an additional percentage on an existing LOT – in line with the current 70/30 split.*
 - *It is critical to approve short-term funding solutions that stabilize the transportation system while also looking for long-term, sustainable revenue.*

Critical Funding Issues:

- **Increase base-level funding for Green Mountain Transit by \$1 million.**

- *We must avoid triggering a “death spiral” for GMT – less service leads to fewer riders, which leads to less federal funding , which leads to even less service.*
- *If we let our transit systems deteriorate now, we are setting ourselves up for a painful transportation bottleneck just as Vermont works to grow its housing stock: more people, more homes, and no viable way to move around without a car.*
- **Restore \$275,000 in funding for Drive Electric Vermont.**
 - *While Vermont lost funding for electric vehicles and bicycles in recent years, it is important to retain the infrastructure that Drive Electric provides to facilitate access to critical information and ongoing opportunities around EVs.*
 - *In this moment of federal retreat and rollback of fundamental environmental protections & regulations, it is more important than ever to maintain critical partnerships that work to electrify our most polluting sector, save Vermonters money, and increase accessibility to EVs and EV charging.*

Important Policy Changes That Don’t Require State Funding:

- **Require publicly available EV chargers to accept credit card payments.**
 - *Today, many EV chargers require drivers to download and use a myriad of different web-based mobile apps, which can be difficult or impossible to access in rural Vermont where cell service is often limited or unavailable.*
 - *Allowing drivers to pay directly by credit card makes charging simpler, more dependable, and accessible for travelers who need to charge on the go.*
- **Permit municipalities to adopt speed limits under 25 mph in designated areas.**
 - *Allowing towns to set speed limits under 25 mph is crucial for enhancing safety, as reducing vehicle speeds significantly decreases the likelihood and severity of fatal crashes, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. Lower speeds improve reaction times and promote walkable, livable communities.*
 - *This authority is especially helpful for small towns seeking to improve street safety with limited access to more costly tools or infrastructure.*

Funding for public transit, electric mobility, and safe streets will support a more accessible, affordable, and sustainable Vermont.

We believe that the proposals outlined in this letter will support Vermont’s broader goals by helping workers access jobs, lowering household costs, improving public health outcomes, and reducing climate pollution. They also play a critical role in supporting Vermont’s housing and economic development strategies by enabling smart growth in downtowns and village centers.

Thank you for your consideration and ongoing work on behalf of Vermonters.

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