

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 30, 2019

Dear Chair McCormack and members of the Transportation Committee,

Thank you for your committee's work to find alternatives to S.84, An Act Relating to Vehicle Inspections. As a coalition, Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT) is deeply concerned about S. 84, which has real implications not only for clean air but also for people's health. T4VT, which represents a range of interests and demographics, agrees that exempting vehicles from emissions testing is not an effective strategy to help Vermonters with vehicles that do not pass the state's emissions testing.

We are encouraged that S.84 has not gained momentum in the House, and appreciate your leadership to help address the cost of repairs while not undermining clean air. As you continue your work, we wish to respectfully highlight certain aspects of the Senate version of the Transportation Bill that remain concerning. We offer the following for your consideration.

We believe that the proposal contained in the Senate's version of the Transportation Bill – to expand the electric/hybrid vehicle incentive program so that repairs for failed emissions systems are an eligible expense – is a promising path for better addressing the specific issue at hand. However, in order for the program to be most successful, several related issues must be addressed:

Delete S.84 language. This repair program must be in lieu of the S.84 language, which is still contained within the Senate version of the Transportation Bill (Section 44). While the language now calls for cars over 15 years to be exempted, instead of 10 years, it is still not an effective strategy.

Dedicate additional funding. Since the incentive program is being expanded to serve more purposes than originally envisioned, it must include additional funding beyond the \$1.5 million. The \$4.5 million that came to the state from two successful consumer fraud settlements with auto manufacturers should be strongly considered as a source for additional funds, so that there is direct consumer benefit. In addition, as suggested by the American Lung Association (ALA), the repair program could be funded by a small

(\$.50 to \$1.00) surcharge on vehicle registration fees. With an estimated 614,000 vehicles registered as of 2015, a \$.50 increase could raise over \$300,000.¹

Add minimum spending allotments. To ensure that a meaningful amount of funding still helps to catalyze the purchase of cleaner vehicles, there should be percentage expenditure minimums added to each program – the electric vehicle incentive program, the high fuel efficiency vehicle incentive, and the emissions repair program – so that the available funds serve these purposes in a balanced way.

We understand that the committee is considering other ways to help consumers meet emissions standards, such as putting a process in place to ensure that consumers know if their car is under warranty, and pursuing an automotive tech training program, as envisioned in H.316. Transportation for Vermonters supports both of these approaches.

While shifting to a more sustainable transportation system is a long-term endeavor – one that ultimately must involve a range of policy issues, from technology to investment choices to land use – we believe these are steps we can take to get Vermonters into cleaner vehicles and help to fix problems associated with older vehicles.

We strongly urge you not to proceed with adopting the legislation outlined in S. 84, or any variations of such language that exempt vehicles from emissions testing, and instead support policies that focus on solving the specific problems at hand, ultimately allowing for a more prosperous future for all Vermonters.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact Kate McCarthy, T4VT Coordinator ((802) 223-2328, x. 114) with questions.

Sincerely,

Transportation for Vermonters

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.

¹ 2017 Vermont Transportation Energy Profile, Vermont Agency of Transportation. p. 23. September 2017. https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/planning/The%20Vermont%20Transportation%20Energy%20Profile_2017.pdf