

## Transportation for Vermonters

AARP VT • American Lung Association in Vermont • CarShare Vermont • Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association • Green Mountain Transit • Local Motion • Renewable Energy Vermont • 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

Dear Members of the Vermont Senate Transportation Committee,

We hope this message finds you well despite the rapid and disorienting changes to our state and world. We know your lives as well as those of your constituents and communities are being disrupted in ways we've never seen before. We want to offer our sincere appreciation for the work of the committee on emergency response measures over the past few months.

As we begin to turn our attention to Vermont's long-term recovery, our coalition is writing to express the importance of our transportation priorities in helping Vermonters and our struggling communities weather the economic and social realities they face:

1. While we understand that the Agency of Transportation needs flexibility to respond and adapt to the COVID 19 crisis, we appreciate the House Transportation Committee's proactive work to prioritize transportation projects that are consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Energy Plan, keep Vermonters working, and ensure that all Vermonters have access to clean and safe transportation. We support the concept that these projects should receive priority consideration if the state receives additional revenues.
2. We appreciate the committee's commitment to follow through on the recommendations from the Report on Methods to Increase the Use of Public Transit in Vermont. With the COVID19 crisis impacting the mobility of many vulnerable Vermonters, it is critical that the state continues to prioritize investments in a variety of publicly funded transit modalities. We see "transit" as encompassing the network of choices that link people to where they need to go, whether shared vehicles, bikes, walking, or buses. We strongly support your guidance that, to the extent possible, federal COVID19 relief money needs to be invested in

fare-free transit as a matter of public safety for the drivers and riders, as well as making transit and other mobility options more accessible for all.

3. We support the Committee's work to incentivize vehicle electrification and want to make sure this priority is maintained. Because 85 cents of every dollar that is spent on gasoline leaves Vermont and the region, a proactive policy to electrify transportation and keep more money circulating within the state should be part of our path to economic recovery. Transferring energy consumption to local renewable electricity will save money while also creating high paying quality jobs. We understand the EV incentive program will continue, and we also hope that potential federal relief money will be used to fund both electric vehicle incentives and the low-income vehicle emissions program to support successful implementation. We are pleased to see the committee's recommendation that the Capital Bill invests \$750,000 in electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
4. Going into this legislative session, we were hopeful for increases in the Downtown Development Fund. We appreciate the committee's work to support this in the original Transportation Bill and maintain an increase now. Now more than ever our downtowns need all the support they can get to recover and become more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly.
5. We are optimistic about the Agency of Transportation's review of programs for Transportation Demand Management. We hope that with the new prevalence of "telecommuting," the agency finds ways to further advance these programs and not discard the work of the committee.
6. With the potential influx of federal money, we also see an opportunity to ensure that all paving projects on roads frequently used by cyclists include the necessary buffers to allow for bicycle and pedestrian-friendly roadways. With increased demand for biking in the wake of COVID 19, these projects are especially necessary.
7. We further encourage acceleration of using the significant remaining portion of the federal VW settlement funds to increase electric heavy duty fleet vehicle access and usage. While we fully support using the maximum amount allowed for public EV charging equipment, there is no reason to delay using these

funds to further deploying electric school or transit buses, delivery trucks, garbage / recycling trucks, forklifts, or other eligible reliable and available vehicles.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your dedicated work in unprecedented times. Please don't hesitate to contact the coalition with any questions,

Sincerely,

Transportation for Vermonters

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*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.*