

## Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT)

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

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### **Investing in Sustainable Transportation to Promote Recovery and Opportunity** **2022 Policy Agenda**

Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT) believes that bold investments in a sustainable and accessible transportation system can improve people's quality of life, better serve historically marginalized and underserved communities, support the economic recovery we need, and shift us toward a cleaner transportation system that reduces our contribution to the climate crisis. With the passage of the Vermont Climate Action Plan, the on-going impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and unprecedented incoming federal funding, Vermont has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make significant progress toward achieving the wide-ranging benefits of a sustainable transportation system.

To succeed, we must commit and prioritize incoming federal funding to pay for clean transportation infrastructure and innovative programs that focus on reducing emissions and ensuring equitable access to mobility options for all Vermonters. Specifically, we must:

- Expand transportation options to reduce dependence on single-occupancy, internal combustion vehicles and better serve all Vermonters. *(more detail on page 2)*
  - Expand and maintain active transportation infrastructure, including biking, walking and other micromobility modes.
  - Expand and maintain shared mobility infrastructure, including public and micro transit services, car share and shared micromobility modes.
  - Encourage transportation demand management (TDM) planning for employers.
  - Promote rail as a practical alternative to long-distance intercity passenger travel and commercial freight.
- Support downtowns, villages, and compact town centers to achieve transportation efficiencies and build resilient, well-connected communities. *(more detail on page 3)*
  - Provide financial and technical support for designated downtowns and village centers to enhance local transportation networks and options.
  - Improve implementation of Complete Streets and update the Vermont State Road Design Standards.
- Accelerate adoption and reduce barriers to electric vehicles (EV) and more fuel-efficient vehicles for all Vermonters. *(more detail on page 4)*
  - Enhance EV purchase incentives, vehicle replacement programs, and EVSE (charging station) grant programs to better serve low-income and BIPOC

communities, including the New PEV Incentive program, Replace Your Ride, and Mileage Smart.

- Expand EV and EVSE incentives to allow municipalities, non-profit organizations, and businesses to participate.
- Target EVSE investments to multifamily housing and workplaces to increase equitable access to charging.
- Do not implement EV contributions to the Transportation Fund until they constitute at least 15% of automobile sales in Vermont.
- Establish and fund a zero-emission vehicle school bus and public transit bus grant program.
- Commit to sustainable funding for clean transportation and align budgets to achieve shared priorities. *(more detail on page 5)*
  - When regionally viable, pursue a strong and equitable Transportation and Climate Initiative program (TCI-P) or a commensurate approach.
  - Require state budget screens for the Capital Bill, the “Big Bill” and the Transportation Bill to better align investments with state climate requirements and equity goals
  - Implement a vehicle efficiency price adjuster as recommended by the Climate Action Plan to disincentivize high emission vehicles and incentive low emission vehicles, designed to mitigate potential impacts on rural and low-income purchasers.

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### **Expand Transportation Options to Reduce Dependence on Single-Occupancy, Internal Combustion Vehicles and to Better Serve All Vermonters.**

Our development patterns, rural landscape, and aging population mean that additional investment in transportation - along with innovation and modernization - are needed to serve the Vermonters’ needs. We see sustainable transportation as encompassing the network of choices that links people to where they need to go, whether shared vehicles, carpooling, bikes, walking, trains, or public transit. Simple, reliable, and timely multimodal connections provide an accessible and effective alternative to dependence on single-occupancy vehicle travel. Taking advantage of new technology and micromobility options can support planning efforts to integrate bus routes with car and bike-share locations, bike routes, interregional passenger and commuter rail, and other complementary transportation services. We envision a system that decreases greenhouse gas emissions and works for all people in Vermont, with special attention to Vermont’s older adults, people with disabilities, and people with lower incomes.

#### **Policy Actions:**

1. Modernize our transportation system by improving overall multimodal mobility options.

- a. Expand and maintain physical and technical infrastructure to improve safety and use for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit users, including building out multimodal transportation networks.
    - i. Prioritize capital investments in the maintenance and enhancement of existing infrastructure, including sidewalks, transit shelters, lighting, bike racks, bike lanes, and signage.
  - b. Increase state investment in the Bicycle & Pedestrian grant program to eliminate local match requirements and expand access for municipalities.
2. Prioritize funding for shared-use mobility and public and micro-transit options.
- a. Make fare-free transit permanent. Fare-free service allows for socially distant and simplified boarding, reduces the financial burden on people who rely on transit, optimizes existing service, and will help to rebuild transit ridership.
    - i. The required local match for transit service should also be considered, as it creates a disparity in service.
  - b. Support workforce development to avoid reductions in public transit service.
  - c. Continue funding of on-demand microtransit projects and services to address first/last mile problems and improve transit efficiencies by incentivizing more people to use shared transit more often.
  - d. Provide funding to expand shared-use mobility options, such as carsharing.
  - e. Consider sustainable funding options, such as those recommended in the 2021 Transit Funding Study.
3. Promote mobility solutions that reduce auto dependence, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve mobility and access for transit-dependent Vermonters through coordinated and integrated transportation demand management (TDM) programs.
- a. Increase funding for the Mobility and Transportation Innovations Grant Program to \$10,000,000 for FY23 to incentivize innovative strategies.
  - b. Develop telecommuting policies for state employees to lead by example and allow for long-term telecommuting.
  - c. Require employers with 50 or more employees to design, adopt and implement a TDM plan that reduces vehicle miles traveled.
4. Plan for and invest in rail infrastructure improvements to increase commuter, long-distance passenger, and commercial rail use as an alternative to single occupancy vehicle travel and truck shipping.
- a. Explore commuter trains centered on Burlington-Essex Jct to connect to White River Junction, Brattleboro and beyond. Connect commuter rail to existing runs in Massachusetts and Connecticut.
  - b. Explore state purchase of Burlington - Essex Junction rail line.
  - c. Increase freight weight limit to 286,000 lbs on Rutland - Bellows Falls line.
  - d. Return service to Montreal.
  - e. Advance community rail partnerships to support robust train stations as welcome centers for both in and out-of-state travelers.

### **Support Downtowns, Villages, and Compact Community Centers.**

When housing, jobs, schools, and services are closer together, people have more transportation choices, which saves them money and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Supporting investments like water and wastewater infrastructure, sidewalks, trails, bike paths, and housing in smart growth locations helps lay the foundation for a diverse, sustainable transportation system. Supporting full implementation of the state's 2011 Complete Streets Policy, which ensures that roads safely accommodate all transportation modes and people of all ages and abilities, is also essential.

#### Policy Actions

1. Continue programs to provide financial and technical support for designated downtowns and village centers, including the Downtown Transportation Fund.
  - a. Continue eligibility of designated village centers for the Downtown Transportation Fund.
2. Strengthen implementation of Complete Streets Policy to reduce the domination of automobile-centric places and mobility by considering all road users' needs.
3. Update VT State Road Design Standards to support complete street objectives.
4. Direct federal ARPA & infrastructure funding toward water and sewer infrastructure in compact centers to improve transportation efficiencies and options.
5. Increase funding for Better Places and Better Connections programs to provide greater municipal and regional implementation capacity.

### **Reduce Barriers to Electric Vehicle (EV) Adoption.**

EVs play an important role in the reduction of greenhouse gases. We believe that new burdens on EV users and potential EV users could hinder the growth of the EV market precisely when we need to rapidly accelerate EV adoption if we are to reduce carbon emissions, meet the state's established climate objectives, and avoid the most dire effects of climate disruption.

#### Policy Actions

1. Enhance and expand EV purchase incentives, vehicle replacement programs, and EVSE (charging station) grant programs to better serve low-income and BIPOC communities.
  - a. Improve effectiveness of the MileageSmart Program by providing a flat incentive of \$5,000 for all eligible Vermonters or an incentive tiered based on income rather than vehicle price.
  - b. Target EVSE investments to multifamily housing and workplaces to increase equitable access to charging.
  - c. Provide ongoing funding for the Replace Your Ride pilot program to support the transition to cleaner alternatives to high emission vehicles.
  - d. Continue funding for the New PEV Incentive program.
2. Expand EV and EVSE incentives to allow municipalities, non-profit organizations, and businesses to participate.
3. Do not implement EV contributions to the Transportation Fund until they constitute at least 15% of automobile sales in Vermont.

4. Establish and fund a zero-emission vehicle school bus and public transit bus grant program.

### **Commit to Long-Term Funding for Sustainable Transportation and Align Budgets with Priorities.**

Without long-term, dedicated funding for non-SOV and public transportation infrastructure, amenities and initiatives, Vermont will continue to struggle to meet its social, environmental and economic goals. Recognizing that existing revenue streams are declining as projects with ever-increasing costs are demanded, new and innovative funding is needed. Further, to ensure available funds are distributed appropriately to meet our goals, budgetary decisions must be aligned with the State's statutory priorities.

### Policy Actions

1. To assure annual emissions reductions and sustained revenues, pursue a strong and equitably implemented Transportation and Climate Initiative program (TCI-P), when regionally viable, or a commensurate policy or regulatory approach. Long-term, sustainable funding for efficient transportation options is imperative and must include a process and parameters for ensuring revenues are invested in relevant clean transportation solutions, particularly for people often left behind by today's system pp people with low incomes, people of color and those living in rural areas. These funds must be protected or reserved for efficient transportation options.
  - a. Support complementary policies to ensure equitable implementation and investments.
2. Require state budget screens for the Capital Bill, the "Big Bill" and the Transportation Bill to prioritize incoming COVID Relief, Infrastructure, and other potential federal funds for equitable and sustainable transportation projects. When possible, Vermont should make appropriations of revenues/funds to programs that support - not contradict - Vermont state climate policy and accelerate an equitable transition that prioritizes low income, overburdened, and underserved BIPOC Vermonters.
3. Implement a vehicle efficiency price adjuster as recommended by the Climate Action Plan to disincentivize high emission vehicles and incentive low emission vehicles, designed to mitigate potential impacts on rural and low-income purchasers.

## T4VT Glossary of Terms

- **Complete Streets:** transportation policy and planning principles that ensure that “ the needs of all users of Vermont’s transportation system—including motorists, bicyclists, public transportation users, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities—are considered in all state and municipally managed transportation projects and project phases, including planning, development, construction, and maintenance, except in the case of projects or project components involving unpaved highways.” (Vermont Act 34)
- **Micromobility:** “any small, low-speed, human- or electric-powered transportation device, including bicycles, scooters, electric-assist bicycles, electric scooters (e-scooters), and other small, lightweight, wheeled conveyances.” (Federal Highway Administration”
- **Microtransit:** “IT-enabled private multi-passenger transportation services...that serve passengers using dynamically generated routes, and may expect passengers to make their way to and from common pick-up or drop-off points.” (Federal Transit Administration)
- **Shared-Use Mobility:** “Transportation services that are shared among users, including public transit; taxis and limos; bikesharing; carsharing (round-trip, one-way, and personal vehicle sharing); ridesharing (car-pooling, van-pooling); ridesourcing; scooter sharing; shuttle services; neighborhood jitneys; and commercial delivery vehicles providing flexible goods movement.” (Federal Transit Administration)
- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM):** “a broad set of strategies that strive to either reduce or reallocate automobile travel to achieve benefits such as reduced roadway congestion, improved air quality, reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, reduced parking demand, improved public health for those biking or walking, and reduced commuting and travel costs.” (Vermont Agency of Transportation)

*Transportation for Vermonters is a broad coalition committed to increasing the affordability, access, and sustainability of Vermont’s transportation system.*

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