

Summary Questions

Meeting #4: Transportation [AFTERNOON]

Questions for Cross-cutting Groups

- Land use change and infrastructure development are slow, but have a long-lasting effect, while availability of other modes and different vehicles and fuels can have a faster impact, but requires continuing investment. How should the CEP address and reflect the different timescales on which different transportation energy changes have greatest effect?
- The 2011 Comprehensive Energy Plan addressed the transportation sector through 2 primary focus areas:
 - One is through “demand management” or gaining energy efficiency by providing mobility through more energy efficient modes such as transit, ride share or walking and biking and increasing the overall efficiency of the cars and trucks on Vermont roadways.
 - The other is replacing the fossil fuel powering transportation with renewable fuels such as bio-fuels or electricity generated from renewable sources.

How should the plan address the components of these two areas? Should vehicle efficiency and fuel switching goals and priorities be integrated, and distinguished from mobility demand management?

- Policy makers are facing a dilemma. As vehicles are becoming more efficient, people are switching to more efficient modes and powering their vehicles with fuels other than gasoline or diesel, gas tax revenues are declining. This trend will be exacerbated in the years ahead as the state makes strides in reaching its energy and GHG reduction goals. Increased transportation revenues are sorely needed not only to keep Vermont’s roads and bridges in a state of good repair, but also to increase transit service, build sidewalks and bike facilities and make other energy smart transportation improvements. What should Vermont be doing to lessen its dependence on the gas tax? Are there alternative transportation revenue sources the state should be pursuing?

Questions for Topical Groups

Land use/smart growth:

The state’s land use goals and designation programs promote compact, mixed-used communities. Vermonters that live near work, schools, grocery stores, transit and other services can more easily meet their needs on foot or bike or in combined short car trips. This type of land use pattern provides a ‘locational efficiency’ that dramatically influences how we live, our quality of life, the amount of money we spend on cars and fuel – and our use of energy for transportation.

While there is new enthusiasm and momentum to revitalize our compact centers, recent data shows that 77% of new housing development in Vermont occurs outside these areas. In most families, transportation is the second-highest expense after housing and this trend in development increases our reliance on single occupancy vehicles. With 38% of Vermont’s energy use and 46% of greenhouse gas emission from transportation, programs and policies that support Vermont’s historic settlement pattern and promote location efficiency not only improve our quality of life, but advance a number of policy goals – from economic development to natural resource protection to energy efficiency.

- Today you received a quick overview of the state programs and collaborations to promote compact communities and location efficiency. What is your community doing to link land use and transportation? What else do you think your municipality could be doing? What do they need to accomplish this?
- What can state government be doing?
- How can we best communicate the energy benefits of living and setting up business in these areas?

Alternative modes (beyond the SOV):

- What are the most effective three actions the state could take to decrease use of single-occupancy vehicles?
- Should the state establish an explicit annual Vehicles Miles Travelled (VMT) goal? If so, what should it be?
- Increased use of transit service is an important strategy in reducing VMT, but buses themselves are inefficient when they are not running at capacity. Also alternatives to diesel such as CNG and the associated technologies are not cost effective for transit providers without subsidies. How can Vermont green its transit fleet?
- Addressing the energy use associated with freight movement is challenging. Truck technologies and goods movement are the result of national and regional policies and economic decisions on which the state has limited influence. Freight movement around and through Vermont represents a significant and growing portion of the state's transportation energy use and GHG emissions. The current CEP considers shifting goods from trucks to rail as one strategy, but the commodities that can be moved by rail are limited – none that require “just in time delivery”. Should goods movement be considered in the CEP? What groundwork should this CEP lay for the increased use of modes other than trucks for freight?
- Are there particular alternative mode options that are well suited to use by tourists, or serve to attract tourists, while also improving transportation energy? Should they receive particular emphasis in state policy?

Vehicles and fuels:

- What are the two or three most important steps the state could take to encourage electric vehicle leases and purchases (such as creating a purchase incentive program, making public charging more available, and/or working with manufacturers to make more new and used EV models available in Vermont dealerships)?
- Many states and auto manufacturers believe that consumer incentives will be essential for reaching a tipping point in EV sales. Should Vermont consider using public funds to incentivize broader uptake of EVs as other states have done, and how should such incentives be designed and funded?
- The Total Energy Study identified the uncertain potential of liquid biofuels as a fundamental uncertainty for the state's energy portfolio in the coming decades. How should the 2015 CEP address liquid biofuels? Should it identify particular sectors or end uses where policy should encourage or rely upon these fuels? If so, which sectors or end uses?
- EVs, biofuels, and CNG would all require new fueling infrastructure. What should the CEP say about developing that infrastructure?