

## **For Immediate Release**

December 21, 2020

### **States Sign Onto Regional Program to Cut Transportation Pollution**

*The Transportation & Climate Initiative Will Move Forward – Without Vermont for Now*

Today, three East Coast states (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) and the District of Columbia announced their commitment to officially join the Transportation & Climate Initiative (TCI), a cap-and-invest program designed to reduce pollution from the carbon-intensive transportation sector and use revenues raised to invest in equitable solutions that serve the unique transportation needs of different states.

This was the earliest point at which states could sign on and more are expected to do so in the coming weeks and months. States such as New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Delaware, Maine, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia have all agreed to remain engaged and continue with the negotiation towards joining TCI.

The crafting of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the culmination of a decade's worth of work and a product of state executive branches, including Governor Phil Scott, over the last four years. The release of the final MOU today is the first opportunity for legislators and other stakeholders to dig into the details of the program. One critical component that policy makers should pay close attention to is the likely financial cost to Vermonters from the participation of neighboring states. About 95% of Vermont's transportation sector is powered by fossil fuels, and we import 100% of the oil and gas we consume. With regional participation from Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, because of market dynamics, if Vermont does not participate in the program Vermonters will likely pay TCI's compliance costs without receiving any of the benefits.

"With transportation accounting for almost half of Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions, we are in dire need of strategies like TCI that begin to significantly reduce planet-warming pollution," said Johanna Miller, energy and climate program director at the Vermont Natural Resources Council. "TCI is not a silver bullet solution by any means, but it's one important foot forward. It offers a much-needed revenue stream to invest in 21st century transportation options and solutions that, in particular, serve lower-income and more vulnerable Vermonters well."

"Vermonters want cleaner and more affordable transportation options, and TCI presents an important opportunity for investing in the solutions we need. We urge Governor Scott and the state's Climate Council to look closely at how TCI could work for meeting both our climate needs and helping those Vermonters who are most burdened by the current transportation

system. Any path forward should include putting guardrails around our participation in this program that ensure any revenues are strategically invested to drive down pollution in ways that address and prioritize equity issues,” added Lauren Hierl, executive director of Vermont Conservation Voters.

“Everyone understands there is an incredible need to invest in modern transportation infrastructure, to cut Vermonters’ transportation costs, and to cut carbon pollution” said Ben Edgerly Walsh, climate and energy program director for VPIRG. “This regional initiative is one clear potential path to that goal. We appreciate the Scott Administration’s hard work in the regional negotiations that led to today’s announcement, and we look forward to engaging with the Climate Council as they dig into the details of this MOU. That work can and must be done in a way that is inclusive, and one that advances equity, is antiracist, and works for Vermonters in every corner of the state. The Climate Council and the Scott Administration must hit that mark - and they should know that they have many allies in that necessary work.”

"Geographic mobility and economic mobility go hand in hand. Vermont's outdated, fossil-fueled transportation system is not only our biggest source of climate pollution but a massive drain on our businesses, employees, and overall economy," said VBSR Public Policy Manager, Jordan Giaconia. "While we share concerns around the equity and ambition of the final MOU, we still see TCI as a tremendous opportunity to redirect spending away from out-of-state fossil fuels and toward transportation solutions that save Vermonters money, create jobs, and grow local economies. Governor Scott can and must work in concert with the Climate Council to shape TCI in a way that puts less pollution in our atmosphere and more dollars in the pockets of Vermont's low income, rural, immigrant, and BIPOC communities."

“The TCI is an important regional effort to cap emissions from the transportation sector – a huge contributor to the climate crisis,” said Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur, Director of Clean Transportation at VEIC. “A careful investment of funds from this work can reduce GHGs, lower household costs, and improve access to jobs, services and communities. It is particularly important that communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and those under-served by our current transportation system benefit from this program. We are supporting this initiative and helping to identify meaningful investments that will make transportation cleaner and more equitable. It is a promising start but we have a long way to go. We hope to see more states, including Vermont, sign on to the initiative in the coming months.”

As this process moves forward, Governor Scott and Vermont’s newly-established Climate Council will have the opportunity to look closely at how TCI could help Vermont meet its climate pollution reduction requirements while helping all Vermonters access more affordable and cleaner transportation options.

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Read a press release released today from the regional Our Transportation Future Coalition on this announcement:

<https://www.ourtransportationfuture.org/finalmoustatement>