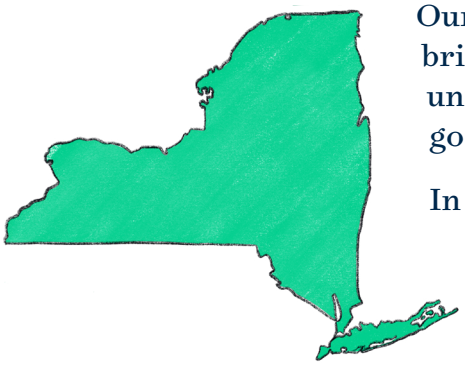
MARCH 2019
FS: 19-03-J

FACT SHEET

MODERNIZING NEW YORK'S TRANSPORTATION



Our transportation system—the complex network of roads, bridges, railways, ports, bike paths, sidewalks, and waterways that unites our country and allows the free movement of people and goods—is broken.

In New York, traffic jams, delayed buses and trains, streets unsafe for walking or biking, and dirty air are facts of life for many. Motor vehicle exhaust is the number one source of climate-changing carbon pollution in the state, emitting even more than power plants.[1] And because the vast majority of fossil fuels powering our vehicles must be imported into New York from other states and countries, we're sending billions of dollars a year outside the state rather than investing in solutions to keep our transportation dollars here at home.[2]

With the right policies in place, New York could chart a new course. Clean and modern electric buses and trains could provide fast, reliable, and convenient service. Streets could become shared spaces for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists driving clean vehicles. We could make it easier, healthier, and safer for people across rural, suburban, and urban communities to get around.

For more information, contact:
Bruce Ho, bho@nrdc.org
Jackson Morris, jmorris@nrdc.org

www.nrdc.org
www.facebook.com/nrdc.org
www.twitter.com/NRDC

© Adam Coppola Photography/ The Green Lane Project

ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES UNDER THE TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE

Recently, many of New York's neighbors committed to investing in a cleaner, modern transportation system that will address these transportation challenges and provide good jobs, cleaner air, and better services.

These discussions have arisen out of the Transportation and Climate Initiative, or TCI, whose participants include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, Maryland, Delaware, New Hampshire, Virginia, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Through the initiative, the TCI members have been exploring ways to clean up and improve transportation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region since 2010.

In December 2018, a majority of these jurisdictions committed to developing a regional clean transportation policy together by the end of 2019. While New York has not yet committed to participate, it hopefully will do so soon. The states' announcement followed a series of public listening sessions in 2018, including sessions in Albany and New York City, in which the TCI members solicited stakeholder perspectives on the region's transportation system and how it could be improved.[3] The sessions drew more than 500 stakeholders from across the region, including business leaders, community members, municipal officials, advocates, and policy experts. This broad cross section of citizens voiced strong support for:

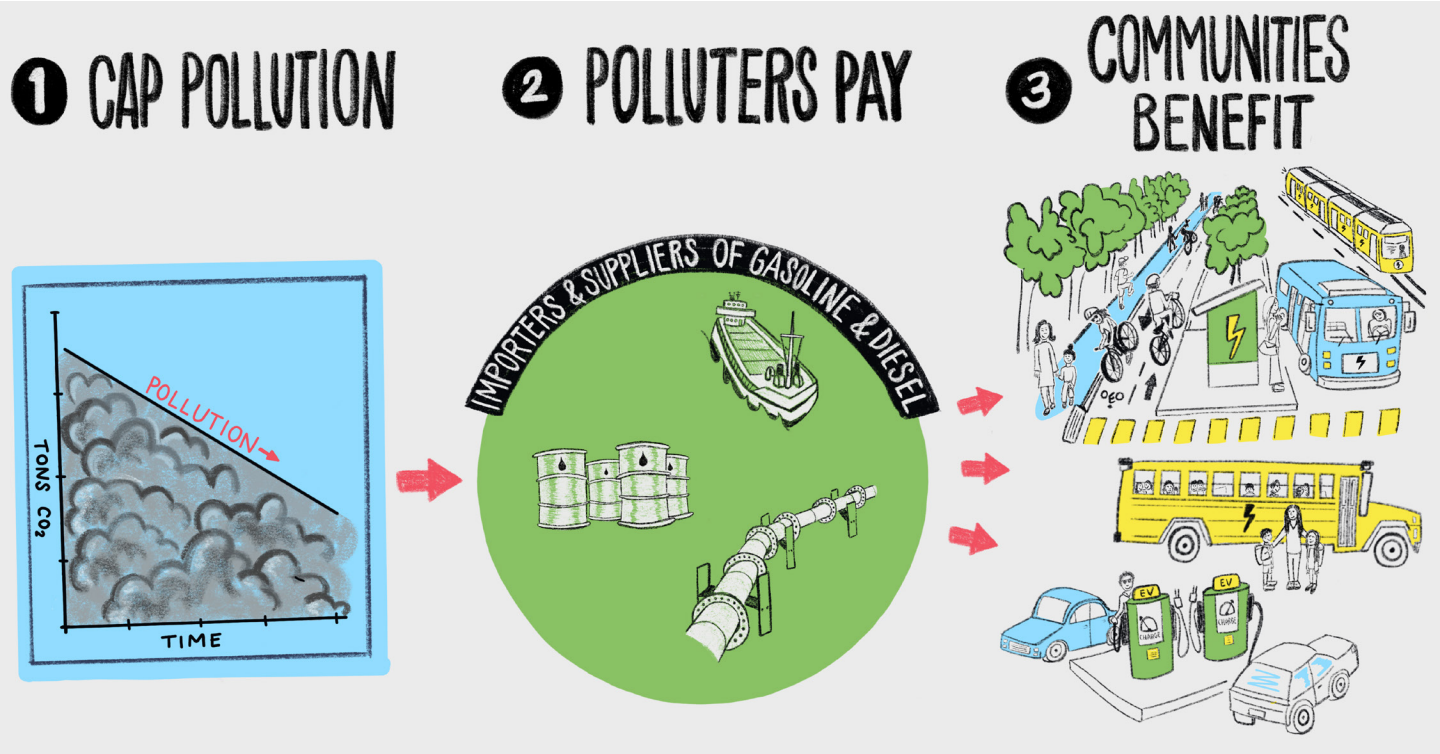
- Investing in and expanding public transportation options in rural, suburban, and urban areas;
- Making streets safer for walking and biking;
- Making electric vehicles—and the infrastructure to keep them running on clean, renewable energy—more available and affordable, including to low- and middle-income families; and
- Providing programs and incentives to transition commercial and public vehicle fleets, including transit and school buses and larger freight vehicles, to cleaner alternatives that reduce tailpipe pollution.

A key message from the listening sessions was that an improved transportation system must be both clean and equitable, providing better transportation opportunities for all residents regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, family type, income, or ability, and across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION THROUGH CAP-AND-INVEST POLICY

An innovative policy approach called "cap-and-invest" is already addressing similar challenges in the electric power sector and could help us reach our transportation goals.[4] This policy is expanding renewable energy, lowering utility bills, and boosting state investment in clean energy, all while cleaning up the power grid, the second-largest source of carbon pollution after transportation.

Here's how a similar model would work in transportation:



© Jessica Russo, NRDC

- **First**, the policy would establish a total regional limit, or cap, on the amount of pollution from vehicle fuels across the participating states. The cap would decline over time, reducing more and more tailpipe pollution and making communities healthier.
- **Second**, to enforce the cap, major fuel suppliers would be required to buy carbon allowances—each equal to one ton of carbon dioxide emitted—in proportion to the pollution from the fuels they sell. These allowances would be sold at auction up to the cap level. As the cap ratchets down, suppliers would have to reduce their pollution, switching to cleaner alternatives.
- **Third**, auction revenues would be invested in programs to accelerate the transition to cleaner, more efficient, and more affordable transportation options. Policymakers could prioritize investments in projects that benefit communities most harmed by pollution; improve public transportation and public health; accelerate the deployment of clean, electric buses and trucks; and lower the cost of purchasing clean vehicles, all while helping to grow our economy and create jobs.

Combined with complementary policies—such as clean car standards; measures to reduce congestion; and additional investments in public transportation, electric vehicles, and walkable and bikeable communities—a cap-and-invest program could yield sizable benefits. It could transform our broken transportation system into a world-class network that provides more transportation options, improves our quality of life, cleans up the air, and better serves all of New York.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The TCI states will explore cap-and-invest and other potential policies before selecting a preferred regional approach by the end of 2019. As these discussions proceed, there will be additional opportunities for public input, and it will be critical for New York policymakers to hear from residents about the need to work with other states to move forward on this groundbreaking transportation initiative. As states develop the regional policy, it will also be important to ensure that other state and local initiatives continue to move forward to clean up and modernize transportation. Ultimately, we will need a combination of efforts to succeed.

WHO WILL BENEFIT, AND HOW

Rural Communities

- On average, rural workers must travel 38 percent farther to get to work than urban workers do, and rural households spend 7 percent more of their budgets on transportation than do their urban counterparts.[5] Programs and incentives that enable rural drivers to switch to more efficient vehicles and fill up less at the pump can lower these expenses.
- Incentives for electric vehicles, which have a lower cost-per-mile than their gasoline- and diesel-powered counterparts, can be particularly beneficial.[6] A wide range of electric vehicle models is available, and choices are increasing, including electric trucks and SUVs already on the market or coming soon. In addition to reducing fuel costs, electric vehicles have fewer parts—like spark plugs, fan belts, and radiators—to change and maintain.
- Providing convenient, affordable, and accessible rural public transportation options can also lower household expenses, improve mobility options for nondrivers, increase employment, and reduce passenger vehicle miles traveled, while cutting air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

© Eric Wheeler/Metro Transit

Suburban Communities

- Expanding public transportation, including intercity rail systems, can help workers avoid stressful, traffic-congested commutes.
- Linking protected pedestrian and bike paths to public transit corridors, equipping buses with bike racks, and providing park-and-ride locations to link drivers to transit can further make different modes of transit more accessible and suburban communities more livable.
- Increasing electric vehicle charging infrastructure will enable more drivers to use electric vehicles and make it possible for these vehicles to be powered with homegrown wind and solar electricity, boosting local economies by keeping transportation dollars in the region.

Urban Communities

- Five of the nation's 10 most traffic-congested cities are in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region, including New York City.[7] Reducing congestion—with more multiuse development and walkable and bikeable streets—can alleviate the hassle of traffic jams and reduce harmful greenhouse gas pollution.
- Expanding access to clean electric buses and cars and helping transition commercial and public vehicle fleets to more efficient—and quieter—electric models can reduce soot, smog, noise, and greenhouse gases.
- Investing in equitable, transit-oriented development, including affordable housing located near transit hubs, can revitalize urban neighborhoods.

ENDNOTES

1 Ho, Bruce, and Uchenna Bright, *Transportation Reimagined: A Roadmap for Clean and Modern Transportation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region*, Natural Resources Defense Council (hereinafter NRDC), July 2018, www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/transportation-reimagined-roadmap-ne-midatlantic-report.pdf, at 37.

2 Ibid. at 38-39.

3 Transportation and Climate Initiative, *On the Road to a Low-Carbon Transportation Future: The TCI Regional Listening Sessions—What We Heard: Summary Report*, November 2018, www.transportationandclimate.org/system/files/TCI%20Listening%20Session%20Summary%20Report_11-14-2018.pdf.

4 Ho, Bruce, "The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Is a Model for the Nation," NRDC, June 12, 2018, www.nrdc.org/resources/regional-greenhouse-gas-initiative-model-nation.

5 Litman, Todd, *Public Transportation's Impact on Rural and Small Towns: A Vital Mobility Link*, American Public Transportation Association, 2017, www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Rural-Transit-2017.pdf, at 14-15.

6 Union of Concerned Scientists, *Going From Pump to Plug*, November 2017, www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2017/11/cv-report-ev-savings.pdf, at 6-8.

7 INRIX, "Congestion Costs Each American 97 hours, $1,348 A Year," February 2, 2019, inrix.com/press-releases/scorecard-2018-us/.