

Talking Points: Smart Growth & Climate Change

ASK: Include support for smart growth solutions in any comprehensive climate change legislation.

Senate – Ask your senators to tell Sens. Lieberman, Warner, Boxer, and Majority Leader Reid that he or she supports addressing public transportation and smart growth in climate change legislation (especially the Lieberman-Warner climate change bill). Ask if they would be willing to write a letter to Senate leaders supporting such a provision (see sample letter to Sen. Boxer).

House – Ask your representative to tell Reps. Dingell, Oberstar, Mica, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader Boehner to address public transportation and smart growth in their version of climate change legislation.

Legislative Status

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee has approved the Lieberman Warner climate change bill establishing a “cap and trade” system to meet targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The bill provides new support for public transportation but does not currently include funding for local and regional smart growth strategies that are critical to meet climate change goals. The bill is slated for action by the full Senate later this year.

In the House, Speaker Pelosi has established a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming that has been examining the issue. Last year, efforts in the House focused on energy issues but this year climate change legislation is likely to be considered.

The Issue

- Talk about the need to include smart growth and alternative transportation solutions in federal climate change legislation.
- Explain that smart growth solutions are complementary to policies aimed at fuel and vehicle efficiency. Smart growth and transit policies are essential tools for meeting common climate change goals.

The Problem

- The transportation sector is the second-largest source of global warming emissions in the United States.
- It is also the fastest-growing, due mainly to the increasing amount that Americans drive.
- Americans are forced to drive more each year because of a lack of transportation alternatives and sprawling, inefficient land-use patterns.

- Federal transportation policy and spending sends the wrong signal by rewarding driving and fuel consumption (federal funding formulas give more money to states with higher vehicle miles traveled).
- As a result, the total number of miles that Americans drive each year (known as vehicle-miles traveled or VMT) is expected to continue to increase - up to 50 percent by 2030.
- The emissions from all that extra driving would wipe out the expected CO₂ reductions of auto efficiency standards and renewable fuel requirements recently passed by Congress.

The Solution

- We cannot meet the challenge of global warming if we continue on our current development path.
- Transportation alternatives, paired with more efficient land use, are critical tools if we are serious about addressing climate change. These strategies can significantly reduce global warming emissions.
- Recent studies clearly demonstrate that smart growth and transit provide substantial and necessary contributions to limiting emissions.
- Climate change legislation, such as the Senate Lieberman-Warner Bill, **MUST** address the need to help Americans drive less and have viable alternatives – we urge you to support amendments and provisions to climate bills that fulfill this need.
 - Legislation should include spending on transportation alternatives such as light rail, commuter rail, rapid bus service, and passenger rail
 - Legislation should support communities that want to shift to more efficient land-use patterns, promote walking and biking, and develop Main Streets and Downtowns
- The Transportation Bill of 2009 **MUST** address the need to reduce global warming emissions from the transportation sector by prioritizing spending on transportation alternatives and incentivizing efficient land-use patterns.

Use relevant state/local examples to discuss the problem and solution

- In 2006 76% of public transportation referenda were successful - people voted to tax themselves to build public transportation. Do you have a local success story?
- Some states are forging ahead in prioritizing public transportation investments and smart growth
 - Massachusetts has decided that all state spending will be in line with Sustainable Growth principles
 - Washington State has agreed to targets for reducing the amount that state residents drive, and proving public transportation instead
 - New York state has decided to evaluate the impact of transportation projects on global warming, and prioritize low-carbon options
 - What is your state doing?
- How could better public transportation or smart growth improve quality of life for YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?