



October 2, 2014

CEEPC and MWAQC Committees

Testimony re: the Transportation Emissions Gap

Thank you. My name is Kelly Blynn, and I am the Next Generation of Transit organizer for the Coalition for Smarter Growth. I came to the Coalition after years of student organizing on climate change and then work at the climate organization 350.org. Needless to say, I see climate change as the defining issue for my generation, and it motivates me to work for walkable, transit-accessible communities that we know enable people to live lower carbon lifestyles.

That's why the TPB's assessment of the CLRP's projected CO2 emissions compared to COG's climate change goals is of such great concern to me, as well as the 24 organizations who signed our sign-on letter last spring, and the 250 of our supporters who wrote in urging TPB to act on this issue. The 2014 CLRP performance assessment makes clear that while COG's regional climate goal is to reduce emissions 80% by 2050 below 2005 levels, that the list of regional transportation projects, if built, will cause emissions to rise rather than fall. We have on our hands a Transportation Emissions Gap – a major discrepancy between our goals, and our regional plans. Our question is, how can we work together to close that gap now? Because transportation decision take so long to implement, getting started now is critical to make the changes needed.

ITDP's new report, A Global High Shift Scenarioⁱ, models the impact of shifting public investments away from new road projects and auto-oriented infrastructure like parking garages to transit, walking, and cycling infrastructure. According to their research, US urban passenger transportation emissions are already expected to decrease from 670 to 560 megatons due to slowing travel growth by 2050. But if governments implemented a "high shift" strategy that directed funds away from new auto-oriented infrastructure to walking, cycling, and transit infrastructure, the United States could cut their transportation emissions in half to 280 megatons.

The 2010 What Would It Take was a helpful start in looking at how to tackle regional transportation emissions. But because it failed to look at substantial funding shifts towards transit, cycling, and walking and away from road projects, What Would It Take's analysis concluded that federally-mandated fuel efficiency and fuel switching measures were our best options. However, while fuel efficiency and fuel types are improving, research shows that the market and policies are not changing fast enough to meet our goals. The High Shift report suggests that if we are to really look seriously at shifting our investments in this region, we could cut transportation emissions in half, while achieving all the other benefits that lessening car dependency would bring.

I know, this doesn't sound easy, but thankfully, the public is with you to do the right thing. Recent polls indicate that 74% of the American public believes climate change is having a significant impact on our planet now, or will in the future. Americans are also driving less, and are looking for more options that enable them to get out of their cars. Across the country, and in this region, vehicle miles traveled peaked over 10 years ago, and most agencies are slowly accepting this new reality. At the same time, public transit use, cycling, and walking are on the rise. In a Transportation for America poll, 73% of respondents say they currently have no choice but to drive, while 66% of them said that they would like more transportation options so they have the freedom to choose how to get where they need to go.ⁱⁱ

The recent performance analysis of the CLRP revealed a planned 1200 new lane miles and 25 grade separated interchanges, compared to 44 miles of new transit service. How many of these road capacity projects were planned at a time when it was assumed driving would increase steadily forever into the future? How many were planned before we knew the full scale of the climate change problem? My understanding is that many of the road projects on the list were planned years, if not decades ago. How many of those roads and interchanges could we eliminate or "right size" to fit the actual demand we see today?

In short, we can't just rely on technology, and must actively work to reduce vehicle miles traveled. California has supported this move by removing performance measures that favor sprawl and wider roads and utilizing VMT instead. This elegant

solution thus favors the creation of more places where people can walk, bike or take transit, over places where people feel that they have no option but to drive.

We're so thankful you're taking this step to meet today and look seriously at not just what it would take, but what we will do. We are eager to support you in taking on this effort with urgency, and offer the following suggestions to get started:

1. **Be transparent:** We believe a key first step is to provide a transparent assessment of how the CLRP and its specific projects will contribute to regional vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.
2. **Set targets:** We must set a target to know where we need to aim. Please establish a regional greenhouse gas emissions target for transportation that meets the 80% by 2050 goal set for the region, and the corresponding vehicle miles traveled target.
3. **Demonstrate leadership:** We urge you to be creative in leading the region to take on this challenge, whether it means convening stakeholders to host a summit to find solutions, providing technical assistance to jurisdictions to "right size" road projects and increase transit investments, or another approach. The status quo is not an option.

Your meeting today is an important first step in demonstrating that leadership. Now is the time to close the Transportation Emissions Gap, and we look forward to working with you to do so.

ⁱ <https://www.itdp.org/a-global-high-shift-scenario/>

ⁱⁱ <http://t4america.org/maps-tools/polling/2010survey/>