



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON MA 02133-1054

Frank I. Smizik

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Chairman Steven A. Baddour
State House Room 208
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Joseph F. Wagner
State House Room 134
Boston, MA 02133

March 12, 2008

Dear Chairman Baddour,

I am writing today to endorse portions of the Governor's transportation reform bill and to urge the committee to consider greenhouse gas emissions when crafting a compromise transportation reform strategy for the Commonwealth. The worsening climate crisis, together with our emissions reduction targets under the Global Warming Solutions Act, demand swift and bold action on the part of our political leadership and these transportation reform proposals offer the ideal opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

It is beyond debate that global climate change is underway and that greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel consumption is responsible. With climate change, we will see gradually warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and dramatic changes to the New England way of life. Coastal properties will be threatened by erosion and more frequent storms, staple agricultural products like cranberries and maple syrup will no longer be produced in Massachusetts, and people with chronic health conditions, like asthma and heart disease, will be significantly impacted by hotter summers and declining air quality.

As a state, Massachusetts emits over 80 million metric tons of carbon emissions from fossil fuels each year. At over 30 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT_{CO₂E}) annually, the transportation sector in Massachusetts makes up about 40 percent of the state's total carbon emissions, making it the largest source of carbon of any sector in all of New England. Personal vehicle use accounts for about 60 percent of

Massachusetts' transportation emissions, followed by tractor trailer and bus emissions at 20 percent, and air transportation at 9 percent.

Last session, the legislature passed the Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires Massachusetts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 10-25% below 1990 levels by the year 2020. This means that Massachusetts will have to reduce its total greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% by 2020, assuming that our current consumption is not significantly higher than our 1990 levels. In order to achieve this goal, we will have to see substantial reductions in carbon emissions from all sectors of the economy – from households, commercial buildings, power plants, and transportation. We will need all of our executive agencies to work together, as required in the Global Warming Solutions Act, if we are to meet these lofty targets.

Fortunately, we are already on our way toward a less-carbon-intensive economy. The Green Communities Act of 2008 made significant strides in curbing carbon emissions from our energy and building sectors. In addition to this, Massachusetts enacted biofuels legislation, which calls for the development of a low carbon fuel standard, to reduce tailpipe emissions. Finally, with this most recent push for transportation reform, we have an opportunity to plan for a new era of transportation in Massachusetts, where we encourage citizens to choose public transportation, cycling or walking, create infrastructure that supports shipping of goods by freight rail, and promote the purchase of more fuel efficient vehicles.

The Governor's transportation reform plan offers many provisions that support Massachusetts' emissions goals. First, the Governor's proposal establishes greenhouse gas emissions reduction as an institutional goal of the transportation agencies and sets up clear objectives to meet this goal.

Second, the proposal invests in public transportation and rail infrastructure to help move people and goods more efficiently. The use of public transit in Massachusetts has the potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector. In 2006, public transit use led to more than 1.2 MMTCO₂E averted, or about 1.5% of the state's total CO₂E emissions, which is equivalent to taking approximately 225,000 cars off the road for a year. By expanding the use of freight rail to move goods, we can take hundreds of trucks off the roads and reduce our per-ton carbon emissions by two-thirds.

Finally, the proposal encourages cycling, walking and boating as alternatives to driving, and establishes "green" registry fees to encourage people to buy lower emissions vehicles. Studies show that large-scale metropolitan planning strategies that combine lane-use transit policies, parking fees, and congestion fees may reduce vehicle miles traveled by 9 to 10 percent. I urge you to keep these proposals in the final committee report.

In addition to these proposals, I recommend that you consider adding greenhouse gas emissions to the list of issues that the office of performance management tracks and reports to the public. This will help ensure that the transportation agencies are meeting their goals and that the system is as transparent as possible. I would also ask that you consider including a tax incentive for railroad companies that invest in new railroad infrastructure Massachusetts. This helps to create jobs and, since every train has the capacity to take 280 trucks off the road, it reduces congestion on our highways. In addition to the railroad incentive, I would recommend the inclusion of a “feebates” program to encourage consumers to purchase low emissions vehicles.

A survey of available research shows that no single policy is sufficient alone to combat climate change. Instead, a comprehensive, sustainable transportation plan will include a balance of fuel economy and emissions regulations, land-use policy changes, public education, technology research and development, and fiscal measures.

I look forward to working with you on this very important piece of legislation. We have the opportunity to make significant strides in reducing our carbon emissions and achieving the goals set by the Global Warming Solutions Act. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to have any additional information.

Sincerely,

Frank I. Smizik