

Governor's Commission on Climate Change  
Transportation and Land Use Workgroup  
August 4, 2008, Meeting

The Transportation and Land Use Workgroup of the Governor's Commission on Climate Change met for the first time on August 4, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to begin identifying possible goals and strategies for transportation and land use that could contribute to Governor Kaine's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goal. This goal, established in The Virginia Energy Plan and Executive Order 59, calls for the Commonwealth to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below what they would otherwise be under a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario in 2025. The Commission's charge is to identify the actions that need to be taken to achieve the 30% reduction goal. The task of the workgroup is to provide a set of recommendations on land use and transportation to the full Commission.

According to a GHG inventory recently completed by the Department of Environmental Quality, transportation sector emissions are projected to account for 34 % of Virginia's greenhouse gas emissions in 2025. The largest contribution comes from highways: passenger cars (21%), light duty trucks (42%), and heavy-duty vehicles (15%), for a total of 78%. Non-highway transportation accounts for about 22% in the 2025 projection.

The meeting was a working session. The workgroup's discussion touched on the following issues:

- Whether to recommend a specific target for emissions reductions for the transportation sector.
  - Such a target could take the form of a numeric goal (tons of carbon dioxide equivalent) or a percentage of a particular year's emissions.
  - The reference year could be projected BAU emissions in 2025 (similar to the approach of Governor Kaine's overall goal) or a recent reference year. Other states have goals related to 1990, 2000 or 2005 emission levels.
  - There could specific targets for highway emissions, non-highway transportation, or the sector as a whole.
- Whether to recommend a specific reduction target for vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
  - Such a target could take the form of an absolute reduction in VMT over a specific period of time, or a reduction in growth of VMT. Either could apply to overall VMT statewide, or VMT per capita.
    - Over the past twenty years, VMT has growth rather steadily in Virginia. (See "Trends in Key Transportation Indicators," provided by the Office of the Secretary of Transportation at the meeting and available on the Commission on Climate Change website.) However, it has been widely reported in the press that VMT actually went down in the last year for the first time.

- A strategy for reducing VMT could involve a transportation pricing mechanism. The gasoline tax can influence choices about driving, but it is imposed on the amount of fuel consumed rather than the miles traveled. There may be a way to assign a price to the number of miles traveled.
- How emissions from Virginia vehicles can be reduced, beyond affecting the number of miles traveled.
  - Whether Virginia should impose its own fuel efficiency standards that are stricter than federal standards.
  - Whether Virginia should adapt California tailpipe emissions standards, as have 17 other states.
  - Whether Virginia should provide incentives for consumers to purchase low-emission or fuel efficient vehicles.
  - How the Virginia's government can reduce emissions from vehicles driven by state employees.
    - Executive Order 48, which was issued by Governor Kaine in April of 2007, mandates that the Department of General Services include in its policies and procedures (i) requirements for the purchase of fuel-efficient, low-emissions state-owned vehicles and (ii) requirements for the leasing of vehicles that give a preference to compact, fuel-efficient, and low-emission vehicles. E.O. 48 also requires all agencies and institutions to (i) minimize VMT related to state operations, (ii) implement transit and ridesharing programs, and (iii) maximize the use of telecommuting.
  - Whether expectations about the introduction of plug-in hybrids into the market should be factored into electricity infrastructure planning.
  - Whether incentives are needed, such as a "cash for clunkers" program, to remove older, more polluting cars from the road.
- How to increase availability and use of transit as an alternative to automobiles for passenger travel. The Department of Rail and Public Transit is preparing an assessment of transportation choices available to Virginia citizens.
  - The workgroup will work to identify a goal to increase the number of riders using transit or the number of riders per mile. Standards of capacity and quality may also be addressed.
  - Whether the state should provide technical or financial assistance to localities regarding transit-oriented design, access to transit stops, or parking standards (number of spaces or pricing) that might have the unintended consequence of encouraging driving over the use of transit.
  - Whether transit-only lanes should be encouraged in metropolitan areas.
- How to increase walking and bicycling,
  - Whether to set a goal for walking and bicycling, either as a percentage of overall travel or specifically with regard to traveling to work.
  - Whether standards should be set for bicycle parking or bike lanes.
  - How to encourage developers and local governments to create more walkable communities.

- How to increase teleworking, alternative work schedules, and other transportation demand management options such as vanpooling, to reduce the number of miles that workers must drive to and from work.
  - Whether the Commonwealth should have a goal for the number or percentage of workers who utilize demand management alternatives.
    - For state workers, such a goal already exists. According to *Virginia Code* § 2.2-2817.1, “[t]he head of each agency shall set annual percentage targets for the number of positions eligible for alternative work schedules. By July 1, 2009, each state agency shall have a goal of not less than 25 percent of its eligible workforce participating in alternative work schedules. By January 1, 2010, each state agency, except the Department of State Police, shall have a goal of not less than 20 percent of its eligible workforce telecommuting.”
  - Whether additional resources should be provided to programs, such as DRPT’s “Telework!VA” Program, that assist private sector employers in establishing such programs.
- How to increase rail transportation of passengers and freight.
  - Whether to set a goal for shifting freight from trucks to rail.
  - Whether the Rail Enhancement Fund should be expanded.
  - Whether corridor analyses for potential road projects should be required to consider freight rail improvements as an alternative.
  - How transportation funding formulas should allocate funding between transit and roads. Currently, 14.7% of the state Transportation Trust Fund is allocated to the Commonwealth mass Transit Fund.
- How to encourage compact land use patterns, infill development, and other land use decisions that minimize emissions from transportation and energy use.
  - State discretionary funding should be targeted to places where infrastructure already exists, and should encourage compact and mixed-use development. This tenet is reflected in:
    - Executive Order 69, issued by Governor Kaine in June, 2008, which lays out 8 principles of sustainable community investment and requires state agencies to align decisions about the use of discretionary funds with those principles, and
    - *Virginia Code* § 15.2-2223.1, enacted in 2007, which requires high-growth localities to establish urban development areas and provides that “To the extent possible, state and local transportation, housing, and economic development funding shall be directed to the urban development area.”
  - Whether to establish or encourage localities to establish a tree canopy preservation goal.
  - Whether the state’s capacity to provide technical or financial assistance in land use planning to localities should be increased.

Additional information that was sought by workgroup members, to be provided at the next meeting, include:

- How much recently-strengthened CAFÉ (fuel efficiency) standards might reduce emissions that are projected in the BAU scenario.
- Whether rising fuel costs have been or could be incorporated into projections of vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- More information about the Commonwealth's transit incentives programs for employees. VDOT's program is of particular interest.
- Recent initiatives to increase the number of bike lanes in Virginia.