



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Michael Replogle, michael.replogle@itdp.org, +1 240 475 4786

Veronica Ortiz Cisneros, veronica.ortiz@itdp.org, +52 (55) 55 54 71 99 31

NATIONAL WORKING GROUP OF CLIMATE ACTION ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON WHITE HOUSE COUNCIL TO STRENGTHEN NEPA GUIDANCE

In response to the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)'s January 2023 Interim Guidance on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a national working group of high-level urban and environmental development organizations have issued detailed comments on the updated Guidance, calling for stronger leadership and direction from the transportation sector in achieving urgent greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.

APRIL 12, 2023 (Washington, DC) — This week, a diverse national working group — the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Elders Climate Action, Equiticity, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, National Association of City Transportation Officials, Sierra Club, Transportation for America, RMI, and Southern Environmental Law Center — called on the White House Council on Environmental Quality to strengthen its guidance about estimating, reporting, and mitigating GHGs and climate change.

The working group argues that, to date, federal transportation agencies have neglected to use their planning authority, project approvals, investments, and grant-making effectively to make significant contributions to reduce GHG emissions. The group also contends that these agencies are making little progress in restoring healthy environments for communities that bear inequitable and excessive burdens from exposure to transport-related pollution, or in helping to promote more efficient community development patterns to achieve a zero-emission economy.

The submitted comments ask the CEQ to issue Guidance that ensures the requirements of NEPA are implemented so that the federal role in transportation planning, development of transportation programs, approval of transportation projects, and federal investments in State and Local transportation actions contribute to solving the climate crisis, while also enhancing the quality-of-life for local communities. In particular, the working group requests the CEQ to issue Guidance that will:

- 1) Focus transportation agency decisions on the urgent need to reduce total emissions from the transport sector to meet GHG reduction targets set by the U.S. “Nationally Determined Contribution” under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- 2) Establish a NEPA framework to ensure that agencies responsible for the design and operation of the nation’s transportation system develop a coherent strategy for achieving national GHG reduction targets;



- 3) Direct the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) together with States that prepare NEPA reviews of infrastructure investments to consider the impacts that increased highway capacity has on increasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) that contributes to the growth in CO2 emissions from on-road vehicles, and creating vehicle-dependent development that creates barriers to a net-zero economy; and
- 4) Provide clear NEPA criteria that recognize the critical role that transportation decisions played in creating the excessive health burden borne by more than 60 million Americans in frontline communities near heavily trafficked highways, ports, airports, railyards and intermodal facilities, and the need for corrective actions to reverse the injustices of the past to enhance and restore a healthy environment for at-risk communities.

The full comment letter to CEQ provides further examples of these failures and how they could be addressed through better planning procedures. [Download the working group's comments here.](#)

“New guidance is needed to ensure the federal role in transportation planning, development of transportation programs, approval of transportation projects, and federal investments in State and local transportation actions contribute to solving the climate crisis, while also enhancing the quality of the human environment in communities that bear a disproportionate health burden from exposure to pollutants from the transport sector,” said working group spokesman, **Michael Replegle, Founder and Senior Advisor to the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)**. “The Biden Administration should use the statutory authority it has to take action now.”

“Federal agencies are failing to account for significant emissions of GHGs and other pollutants emitted traffic that results from agency actions promoting development that boosts VMT, increases CO2 and other pollutants, and makes communities dependent on personal vehicles rather than zero polluting alternative modes of mobility,” said **Beth Osborne, Director of Transportation for America**. “Agencies are not properly quantifying and disclosing the health impacts that pollutants emitted from transportation facilities have on community health or considering the community health benefits of alternatives that promote zero emission vehicles or minimize the need for personal vehicles.”

“A growing number of states and regions have improved accounting for accessibility and the induced travel effects of transportation investments and programs,” said **Trip Pollard, Land and Community Program Leader for the Southern Environmental Law Center**. “Examples of this progress are documented in the working group’s submission to CEQ, and CEQ needs to raise the bar since many more states and regions are failing to properly account for these critical impacts.”

###

*The **Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)** is a global nonprofit that works with cities around the world to design and implement high quality transport systems and policy solutions that make cities more livable, equitable, and sustainable.*