

April 21, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing to thank you for your leadership in advancing federal climate legislation and including targets for transportation sector emissions reductions in your recent discussion draft. We hope that this section (Section 841, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions Through Transportation Efficiency) will ensure that federal policies support California's existing greenhouse gas reduction goals and groundbreaking new policies.

The transportation sector is the fastest growing source of national greenhouse gas emissions, and the second largest single source, responsible for more than one-third of overall emissions. It's even a bigger problem here in California where transportation accounts for 38% of emissions, and this number is higher still in the Bay Area and Southern California. Clearly, the transportation sector must be held accountable for its fair share of emissions reductions if we are to meet our climate targets.

Investing in transportation choices is also a way to create jobs and provide Californians with economic relief. The average American who lives in an area that's walkable and served by transit spends only 9% of their income on transportation, while a person living in an area that requires driving spends more than 25%. Low-carbon transportation projects also create well paying, green jobs, which is especially important in today's economic climate.

California Needs a Strong Federal Partner to Implement Landmark Law

Despite California's landmark policies to reduce fuel carbon content and improve vehicle efficiency, state leaders understand that increased rates of driving threaten to overwhelm these technological gains. The State of California recently adopted a groundbreaking and innovative law, SB 375, which links transportation funding with adopted land use and housing that will achieve ambitious reductions in global warming pollution. SB 375 is designed to help Californians drive less, make our communities more walkable and healthy, and ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Federal climate legislation should complement California's efforts by providing a strong federal commitment to reducing transportation emissions. This will ensure that California's communities have the resources and support they need to meet state targets. Federal climate legislation should also seek to build on the successful SB 375 model to encourage other communities across the country to set and meet ambitious transportation emission reduction targets.

Recommendations for the Next Draft of the Federal Climate Bill

We believe federal climate legislation should build on California's new law, SB 375. We have the following specific comments on the bill:

- We support the provision that directs the federal government to provide states and regions with funding to support the data collection and modeling tools they need to accurately forecast the emissions reductions from transportation policy and funding decisions.
- The bill should include a national target for reducing greenhouse gases from transportation that is separate from reductions due to improved fuel efficiency and low-carbon fuels.
- State and regional greenhouse gas emissions targets should flow from this national target. Following the model of SB 375, these targets should be set by the Environmental Protection Agency via a process that solicits input from the appropriate state and regional agencies, as well as key stakeholders.
- It is vitally important for the federal government to provide support and funding to state and regional governments across the country to create plans for reducing emissions from the transportation sector. In addition, the federal government should provide funding to implement those plans, both by funding transportation investments and by supporting efforts to revise local land use plans and zoning codes to achieve walkable, transit-oriented land use patterns.
- Lastly, we applaud the bill's inclusion of state and regional air agencies in setting targets. Here in California, air resources agencies are essential partners in implementing SB 375 and related greenhouse gas reduction strategies.

California is on the cutting edge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. The federal government should take this opportunity to build on progress made from and challenges experienced by our state, become a strong partner to help California succeed, and provide the guidance and support to other states so that, as a nation, we can address the pressing threat of global warming.

Thank you again for your leadership and for addressing transportation policy in your draft bill.

Sincerely,

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Local Government Commission

Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director
Sierra Nevada Alliance

Andy Katz, State Government Relations Director and Director of Air Quality Advocacy
Breathe California

Anne Lamb, Executive Director

Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP)

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