

ClimatePlan

Addressing the land use decisions that shape our climate and our lives

State Climate Plan misses the Mark on Land Use and Transit

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On June 26, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) released its Draft AB 32 Scoping Plan, detailing how the state plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. This plan is an important milestone and sets California on the path towards becoming a model for reducing emissions from many sectors. Achieving the mandate of AB 32 is critical to creating a sustainable future for California.

ClimatePlan applauds CARB's efforts to address the greenhouse gas emissions related to land use and transportation patterns. However, we believe the current land use framework falls far short of what is needed to achieve the vision of AB 32.

While the draft Scoping Plan includes some good provisions for land use – such as encouraging more regional collaboration – it sets the reduction target far too low to spur any meaningful change in how our communities grow. The plan has also omitted critical measures to create a world class public transportation system and encourage innovative congestion-relief programs that can ease people's commutes while reducing emissions.

When it comes to building walkable neighborhoods and reducing commutes, CARB has set the bar too low. Currently:

- The draft scoping plan calls for only 2 million metric tons (MMT) of global warming pollution reductions from the land use sector.
- By comparison, the Sacramento region alone (representing 6% of the state's population) has set a goal of .75 MMT from the land use sector by 2020.
- In 2006, California's Climate Action Team (CAT) called on the State to eliminate 18 MMT of global warming pollution emissions using smart land use and transportation efficiency measures.
- The plan omits critical measures to discourage inefficient, auto-dependent growth and encourage compact development close to jobs and transit.
- Bus and train ridership is at an all-time high in California, yet the Scoping Plan omits any discussion of funding crucial transit investments and promoting transportation efficiency to give Californians better options for getting out of our cars.

CARB has an historic opportunity to address climate change, but that can only happen if the Scoping Plan includes a stronger framework for land use and transportation. We encourage CARB to make the following revisions to the Scoping Plan:

- The plan should set a higher reduction target for land use and transportation. ClimatePlan is currently developing an estimate of what is achievable.
- Rather than adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, CARB should set firm targets for regions and authorize regions and localities to choose from a suite of policy tools to achieve the targets.
- CARB should adopt a series of key policy tools currently under consideration, including the Indirect Source Rule, Pay-As-You-Drive Insurance, Congestion Pricing, and Incentive Programs.

These tools will help regions and localities achieve the targets while generating revenues to implement GHG reduction strategies and programs.

- The plan should make it a top priority to invest in and sustain public transportation and programs to improve transportation efficiency and reduce congestion. In many cases, the state, regions, and local agencies can simply redirect funds they are already going to spend.
- Cities, counties and regions should be given incentives to conserve forests and working landscapes that sequester carbon, provide local food, reduce wildfire hazard and help native plants and animals adapt to a changing climate.

By choosing a slow or hesitant plan to reduce our driving, we risk jeopardizing the gains we will make in other sectors as AB32 is implemented. Efficient planning is a key to AB32's success because:

- The transportation sector is the largest single source of global warming pollution in California, contributing approximately 40% of all emissions.
- If current sprawling growth patterns continue unabated, vehicle miles traveled by Californians will skyrocket 70 percent in the next three decades.
- Laying the groundwork for the 2050 emissions reduction target (80%) needs to happen now. The GHG-reduction benefits of better land use will increase steadily over time.
- An underperforming land use sector will raise costs for other sectors. Not seeking more emissions reductions in this sector will increase the burden on other sectors of the economy (autos, energy, freight, buildings) which will have higher costs to reduce emissions.

Better Planning Creates Economic Security: In addition to addressing global warming and air quality concerns, **creating more walkable communities with better public transportation options also creates greater economic security for Californians.** Californians are suffering economically in the face of record high gas prices and falling home values. Smart planning alleviates both issues by:

- Cutting the long commutes Californians can no longer afford.
- Creating public transportation choices that eliminate the need to drive and spend money on gas.
- Creating housing that meets market demand. Consumers are choosing homes near transit and jobs, and these homes have held their value in the current market downturn, while home values in outlying areas have fallen precipitously.

Smart Planning is Good for our Communities: Improving land use planning won't just help address global warming, it will also make our communities better places to live. Some of the benefits include:

- **Improved public health:** Walkable, transit-oriented communities promote active, healthy lifestyles and can reduce obesity-related illnesses such as diabetes.
- **Protection of farmland, forests and natural resources:** Compact development reduces sprawl pressure on open lands.
- **Reducing wildfire danger:** Low-density development in fire-prone areas makes it difficult to manage wildfire and puts more homes and lives at risk. Compact development helps communities minimize the wildfire danger associated with new development.
- **Greater housing choice:** Compact development creates a broader range of housing types that meet consumer needs, including condos, townhouses and small-lot single family homes.
- **Access to jobs and education:** Improving transit in low-income communities allows those who don't own cars to have better access to jobs and education opportunities.

For more information:

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