We adopt this initial Climate Action Plan under the Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) with feelings of both urgency and responsibility to do our part to mitigate climate change through transformation of how we use and source energy; to adapt our communities and built environment to the warming planet; to protect our natural and working lands from the damage created by climate change; and to support and enhance the resilience of Vermont’s landscape and communities. Climate change represents an existential threat for humanity and the natural systems upon which we depend for our health and well-being. It is now critical that we act to become more resilient and adaptive to climate change already underway and that we do more to reduce the emissions that have brought us to this precarious point, in order to create a habitable future.

We also have a strong desire to engage Vermonters deeply and equitably in this transition, recognizing the harm and systemic injustices at work here in Vermont and elsewhere. This initial Climate Action Plan represents the first public process in the State of Vermont to acknowledge and try purposefully to incorporate equity and the principles of a just transition in both its development and outcome – but we know we fell short. During our meetings and outreach, too few Vermonters had their voices lifted up to join the voices of those who have also participated in similar endeavors in the past. In our development of pathways, strategies, and actions, we faced challenges creating programs and policies organically in partnership with all marginalized communities and individuals in Vermont and to envision new ways to ensure a just transition for all of us. As we continue forward, we have a strong desire to engage more Vermonters deeply and equitably in this transition, recognizing the historical and present harms and systemic injustices that are at work here in Vermont and elsewhere.

And yet, there is much in this initial Climate Action Plan to embrace and act upon now, and from which we must build going forward. The recommendations set forth aim to make real and lasting progress toward the significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions required by the GWSA and to strengthen Vermont’s ability to adapt to a changing climate. Many essential, detailed ancillary reports represent new analyses that underpin our work and point the way forward. We adopted several concrete recommendations with wide consensus, designed to promote mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, and we look forward to implementation by the Legislature, state agencies, and our partners in climate action throughout the State. We also identified many areas that will require more conversation and will be the focus of further development at the Council in the years ahead. Just as we have acknowledged the need for the Council to better partner with marginalized communities and individuals in our work moving forward, we urge those involved in Plan implementation likewise to commit to meaningful, effective engagement with those on the front lines to make just transitions possible.

We are grateful for the dozens of devoted subcommittee members; the many committed participants, from members of the pubic to technical consultants, who attended our meetings and events; and the thousands of Vermonters who were able to engage with us in this process. Many of you spent countless hours helping us develop Vermont’s initial Climate Action Plan – thank you.

The Council’s work continues and is ongoing, as contemplated by the GWSA and demanded by the imperatives of climate change. The measure of our efforts now will be in the ways our energy sources change, our natural and built environments adapt, and Vermonters engage in a just transition away from climate pollution and toward a cleaner and sustainable future.