

Vermont Climate Council - Transportation Task Group Meeting - 4.25.22

Present: Jane Lazorchak, Chris Company (WRC), Jared Duval (EAN), Andrea Wright (AOT), Megan O'Toole (DEC), Karen Blakelock (AOT), Johanna Miller (VNRC), Brian Woods (DEC), Greta Hasler (VNRC), Gina Campoli (AOT)

Agenda

Transition to Public Meetings →

Johanna:

- Glad we're moving to public meetings as we move more into substance, seems like we should make sure climate council and subcommittee members should know these are now public meetings
 - Always listed on Climate Council website, **once there is a set schedule for participation, Jane will flag for full Council participation**

Technical analysis RFI/RFP discussion →

Megan:

- Heard back from Climate Alliance late last week
 - Did get funding for ACCII analysis, running quickly, working with NESCAUM to continue, get data they need
 - Large group of states also taking advantage of that technical analysis
- Phase 2- still waiting to hear, but there is **new guidance from FHA** providing AOTs detailed guidance about how to use certain portion of IIJA funding for carbon reduction strategy
- Climate Alliance says carbon reduction strategy looks like your phase 2 plan, can you just use that funding to do phase 2 of your technical analysis application?
 - VTrans and others are still digesting that guidance from FHA, guidelines around IIJA
 - Seems like Climate Alliance is saying this is something you're required to do, money available to make this analysis part of your carbon reduction strategy via FHA— sounds like you're all set
- Climate Alliance has a small amount of money left in their transportation sector related pot of technical assistance money, but its only \$21,000 so it wouldn't cover phase 2 work completely
- Haven't responded to Climate Alliance folks yet, seems like we need to pause, try to understand carbon reduction strategy requirement and how technical analysis of transportation sector for VT could tie into that strategy
- Deadline for carbon reduction strategy to FHA is Nov. 2023—do we extend our timeline for work that we contemplated to align with carbon reduction strategy guidance and timeline?

Andrea:

- IIJA money is available now - \$32M over 5 years for carbon reduction program (\$6M this year)
- Carbon reduction strategy isn't due for another year and a half – still unclear, more about what types of projects we're implementing
- Unclear if we're going to allocate this money via projects and get credit for strategies, or not spend any until we develop a strategy?
- So many different types of funding coming in, agency still developing potential pathways
- Need to dig in more, figure out how everything will shake out

Gina:

- The \$6M you just referenced, is that for the charging stations and all infrastructure? Or research leading up to carbon reduction strategy?
- Need money now to do background research/data analysis
 - Andrea: think it's all of the above – can be used for EVs, transportation demand management, etc.
- What flexibility do you have for the \$6M now? Guidance for federal programs is so critical, but if Climate Alliance thinks our research is eligible that is a good sign
- Can you share read-out of program?
 - Andrea: going to meet with him before sharing, differing interpretations. Once we're settled by end of next week, clear path forward for what this means for us...
 - Every time this guidance rolls out, lots that comes with it, overlaps other funding programs, confusing to dissect

Johanna:

- Look forward to staying tuned in, anything beyond what is within the RFP and memos we put together and shared that may be helpful to Andrea?
- Reminder, when the RFI went out there, responses differed re: estimated cost, but it was somewhere around \$250,000? Can someone clarify the estimate?
 - Megan: don't recall having that information. For lifecycle analysis we had one.
- Wondering if there is an analogy there – could we get some good analysis re: what is affordable to get the good work we need to done?
 - Jane: biggest hinderance now will be timing of funding and meeting requirements
- Seems like if timing is especially challenging for VT (only state with 2025 pollution-reduction timeline, vs. 2030)
- If we need to do the work sooner rather than later, someone who can help support this work in a timelier fashion, reimburse down the road? AOT?

Jared:

- Have all IJA funds already been spoken for in Governor's budget, legislature's budget?
- If we wanted to be able to include this research and analysis within that, would it need to show up in the budget? Or are there broad enough categories within that funding it could fit within? Or are there carveouts of that funding that AOT has discretion over?
- Seems like we could be in an awkward situation where Climate Alliance says you're required, have money to do it, but Governor/legislature doesn't allocate IJA to it...
- Haven't heard any discussion about using federal funds to do research/analysis being approved in budgeting process?

Andrea:

- Don't know exactly how the money comes in, we have coffers coming in from all over the place
- Projects must be identified in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to allocate funds from this program
- What has to happen to have the money specifically allocated to meet eligibility requirements of this program – unknown to Andrea right now

Gina:

- Many big buckets of federal programs within VTrans that are in the legislature's budget
- Millions of dollars allocated to VTrans, for research projects, approved program but not individual projects
- Depends on which federal bucket this falls into – STIP?

Johanna:

- Sounds like there may be some potential flexibility, which Andrea will be looking into it over the next week or two
- What are the parameters of the dollars? What may be possible to inform this conversation?

Jane:

- Want to highlight, point a finer point on requirement that AOT (and therefore where the Administration will likely fall) on timing of broad strategy being a year out from what climate council has identified
- Do appreciate 2025 short-term emissions goal, and no way to know what will happen between now and then, but based on 2021 transportation sector, we're already at 2025 emissions
- Somewhat in a mindset of maintaining reductions, looking ahead to 2030
- Every day is pushing us closer towards not having a major transportation policy recommendation for the fall

Jared:

- Re: the development of carbon reduction strategy, deadline of Nov. 2023 but could happen sooner? Is AOT planning to do something different or new? Why wouldn't the starting point just be the transportation sector of the CAP?
- Can we take what we've already developed for transportation pathways modeling in CAP, submit sooner for carbon reduction strategy, does that open up funds that wouldn't otherwise be available until Nov. 2023?
- Feels like we know we need policy analysis via RFP, in order to inform Council's transportation gap
- Question is just how do we piece together and be flexible and adaptive enough to ensure it gets funded on the timeline we need, with one or more sources?

Andrea:

- Yes, that is exactly what we're trying to do, in addition to better understanding guidance
- Because of when this all rolled out, 2 years post-enactment of the guidance
- Would anticipate AOT's carbon reduction strategy would align with pathways of CAP, have other studies in action that will play into and be incorporated into this carbon reduction strategy
- Just a matter of putting pieces together, determining what funds are available when
- Think we may need to be prepared to not meet schedule we have set up right now, aggressive schedule already
 - Jared: or stay on schedule and make recommendation with the best information we have on hand

Gina:

- Strategy will guide VTrans on federal program in VT, which CAP doesn't do. It doesn't say how many dollars will be spent on transit, or bike/ped programs (individual programs)
- Federal strategy is to guide federal program in VT, really programmatic – the things that transportation agencies do, and how to do them better to address climate ... as opposed to transportation writ large (like current CAP)
- Council needs both right now – what are federal programs going to get us, vs. a policy

Jane:

- Push back on Climate Alliance
- Other piece of info is the somewhat life being brought back into TCI-P – if that becomes a viable strategy again, won't know for a year from now – re: Governor of MA transition and conversations being re-started by Georgetown
- Pre-empting that knowledge may be not putting out another policy rec. without knowing whether TCI-P is viable option?

Jared:

- May be a contingent recommendation, re: TCI-P, which is basically what we already have, i.e. “when regional viability exists, join TCI-P”
- Think we could say that whatever recommendation we develop would work even if TCI-P did move forward
- Wouldn't want to wait for TCI and then be back with all our eggs in that basket without a viable path forward
 - Jane: No, definitely not. Such limited bandwidth, focus on top priorities. Technical analysis that is specific to VT is so key to success. Aligning for funding of technical analysis in a way that allows us to have that information for this fall – so important on a VT-scale.

Chris:

- Has there been a higher-level strategic funding conversation? Have we packaged things up with VTrans re: what they can obligate? Re: IJJA
 - Andrea: No, because guidance is still rolling out, trying to get comprehensive view. Most of them are out for larger programs, grant programs still rolling out. Will be putting together a strategic IJJA funding plan to answer these questions
- VT will have a challenge to create matching funds for much of the IJJA funding. We're such a small state, match will be a challenge
- Agree with Jane that we need a characterization for VT and Vermonters and how the high percentage of household income we spend on gas to get around
- Other piece of that, too, is the viability of rural transit systems – need to factor that in
- Seems like we need a larger, comprehensive blueprint, ties into GHG reductions, targeted effort looking at public transit, charging stations, etc.
- What usually happens when we get that guidance, have to spend hurriedly, will end up falling within administrative schedule by Congress that is rushed

Johanna:

- Andrea will do more digging on this, helpful to regroup after that
- Has anyone spoken to Maine? Another rural state, could help inform analysis we need to do at policy level
 - Megan: it's my understanding that we're the only state that asked for this type of analysis, outside of ACCII
- To-dos:

- Megan will follow up with Climate Alliance, case-make or beseech them to invest? Otherwise, that is a longshot. Agree we need VT-specific info. Megan will communicate timing issue.
 - Jane – clarify how tie federal funds ties emissions reductions to statewide policy, as a good argument to climate alliance about why their funding brings added value to VT (as opposed to federal \$)

Public Engagement →

Johanna:

- Thinking about public webinars – has anyone made any progress on the webinar?

Megan:

- Heard back from James Bradbury, Georgetown Climate Center, he's available to speak about TCI-P at the webinar we have planned
- He's free on the day that worked for everyone, including Peggy – May 13th at noon
- Told James Task Group would reach out, brief coordination call in advance of webinar to discuss run of show, details, logistics, what we're looking for substantively re: his contribution

Jared:

- If that is the date, I can reach out to Marie Claude from Quebec about that date, hopefully she'll be available and will let folks know when I hear

Johanna:

- Let's move forward with that date/time, regroup if needed
- Let's lock in guests – WCI team, and TCI-P team, and then we can figure out who among us can frame it up, format
- On that level of detail, reflect on what went well on webinar we held around Clean Transportation Standard, what can we improve upon for better public participation, input via breakouts, etc.

Jared:

- Past public engagement events – heard feedback that it was helpful to hear background info, how we got here, etc. but missing step re: basic introduction to what is a performance standard before going into details on how it's worked in other places
- Suggesting a 3 step flow – 1. Introduction to GWSA/CAP/work thus far, 2. introduction to the type of policy we're talking about, and then 3. details of how these policies have worked elsewhere
 - 2nd piece: i.e. what is a emissions cap policy?

Johanna:

- Megan and Jared, follow up via email, confirm WCI rep. and we can figure out timing for a coordination call and next steps via email
 - Jared: will also ask about possible times for a planning call – think that will need to be either next week or early the week of May 9th?
- Will also want to develop a public promotion strategy

ACCII and ACT, Rulemaking →

Megan:

- Trying to pull everything together for May 16 deadline, for an update to Climate Council on rulemaking process
 - Close to a shareable draft of the rule to share for 5/16 deadline
 - New attorney has been doing a great job making edits, working with CARB
 - CARB just released ACCII rule on April 12th, very fresh
- Also developing robust technical support document to accompany rule itself, which will not be done by 5/16 deadline
 - Technical analysis support was just engaged, some placeholders will be in that document with more info forthcoming
- Will have a much more robust discussion of ACT, that analysis has been done and available for a while, more complete
- We're including in that a discussion of climate change, how it's impacting VT, health benefits of both rules using COBRA model
- Deidre and Megan are working on cover memo for council to explain what they're getting on 5/15, understand pieces that are forthcoming
- No reason why we shouldn't be able to file with ICAR on July 1 as planned

Jane:

- Re: climate change section you referenced, what is that and why wouldn't it use climate section of CAP? Anything that wasn't reflective of work in CAP would be problematic.
 - Megan: should be consistent with info from CAP and most recent climate assessment
 - Brian: pulled from latest climate assessment, but didn't cross reference with info in CAP but can do that
- Vermont Climate Assessment is slightly problematic, would draw more heavily with Climate Action Plan
- Re: public engagement piece, conversation with Council on 5/16 – that is a component where we can really influence what it looks like on the group
- **Need to flesh out what we bring to Council as public engagement strategy around rulemaking**

Johanna:

- Do we have a sense of timing for public engagement?
- It would be helpful to inform next meetings, consistent schedule. If 5/13 is our next webinar, what are the windows we are working within to make sure we're focused on public engagement?

Megan:

- Can't start public engagement around rulemaking until late August
- If we're doing meetings specific to GWSA rulemaking and are advertising them as being in compliance with rulemaking, can start in August
- **Can have an informal conversation about lessons learned in Maine**

Jared:

- Wondering if the challenge with the timeline with NESCAUM and getting that contract going, having initial analysis ready – is it helpful to have CA analysis as a stand-in/placeholder that can be ready sooner, even if more robust analysis with up-to-date data on a longer timeline?
 - Megan: good question, can connect more offline. Think if we can provide some preliminary picture of emissions benefits we should do that. Wondering if we'll have the resources to compile that prior to 5/15 deadline, but let's connect offline.

Timing/schedule of these meetings going forward →

Johanna:

- Timing of these meetings going forward – weekly, biweekly?

Megan:

- Propose we continue meeting weekly until finality around plan for the year, seems like there is always new information to digest.
- More frequent meetings until we have a better picture of the year
- Robust public engagement schedule takes time to plan, more frequent meetings allows space for that

Chris:

- Need input from VTrans on budget decisions, their budget is huge and complex
- Andrea is still fairly new, Michelle? But her ability to participate is very limited

Gina:

- Agree with Megan, we need to meet every week.
- Look to Andrea to bring in Costa and Michele Boomhower, targeted discussions
- Going to require us meeting every week, too much on the table right now, especially come summer

Johanna:

- Weekly 3:30-5 going forward on Mondays
 - Can invite public input if members of the public can attend and want to share input
 - If we don't need the full 1.5 hours, we can trim
- **Do we want to ask and see what the best timing to get more insight on transpo dollars; maybe inviting Michele Boomhower to attend one of the next, upcoming meetings to have her provide insight?**
- **Make some time in the May 9th meeting agenda, if that timing works for Michele?**