

## **Climate Action Youth Input Session**

*Tuesday, May 5, 6:00-7:30 pm*

### ***Overview***

This document summarizes a May 5 virtual public input session for youth that sought feedback on draft priority actions under discussion by the Vermont Climate Council. Approximately 7 people attended the meeting on Zoom. Another 7 people submitted written comments. Participants mentioned hearing about the event through their schools or as members of the Youth Lobby.

### ***Summary***

The following key themes emerged in the discussions and via written comments around the draft priority actions.

#### ***Cross-Sector Mitigation:***

- Electric vehicles (EVs) are helpful but still emit, are expensive, and strain the grid. Reducing car use overall is better – via walkable cities and better intercity rail.
- Cap and Invest (recommendation #1) and public transit (recommendation #3) were highlighted as important, along with suggestions for how to sustainably fund these programs.
- Little is said in the priority actions about expanding power generation. There's focus on efficiency and electrification, but little on boosting capacity to meet demand.
- Refrigerant management, which is key for scaling AC and heat pumps, should be lifted up as priority.

#### ***Cross-Cutting Issues:***

- Support for integrating climate change education into the curriculum, including middle school or younger, with a suggestion to allow students to choose the depth of their engagement
- Expand adult education, apprenticeships, and support for entrepreneurship and career pathways in the trades. Offer incentives (such as paying for or forgiving loans) for students to pursue these education and career options; offer job-shadowing of climate careers.
- Concern that current education efforts may mainly reach those already supportive of climate action, missing broader or more skeptical audiences.

#### ***Rural Resilience and Adaptation:***

- Support resources to help communities aid vulnerable Vermonters after climate events – reducing impacts on those most at risk is key.

*Agriculture and Ecosystems:*

- Many of the Ag and Eco actions are important for supporting Vermont's farming communities.
- Is there anything about funding farmers to adopt sustainable practices?

*General feedback:*

- Consider marketing materials and climate change innovation grants.
- Promote positive actions already underway to boost hope and community engagement.
- Include quick visuals to explain lesser-known or out-of-state legislation referenced in draft actions, which currently lack context.

## Annex:

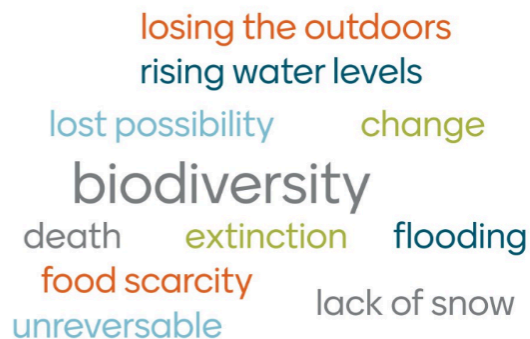
*This annex includes detailed input from youth participants, who shared feedback via Mentimeter, Zoom chat, and in plenary. Participants responded to the following four questions:*

- *When you hear 'Climate Change' what is your biggest fear?*
- *When you hear 'Climate Change' what is your biggest hope?*
- *How has climate change impacted you, your school, your community?*
- *Which of these draft actions do you think are most important for Vermont?*
- *Do you have feedback for the Council to make these draft ideas better?*

*For the purposes of this annex, responses to the last two questions, along with the input from the chat and plenary discussion, have been combined into a consolidated set of responses, organized by thematic bucket. Additional written comments received are listed separately at the end.*

### When you hear 'Climate Change' what is your biggest fear?

12 responses



### When you hear 'Climate Change' what is your biggest hope?

15 responses



### **How has climate change impacted you, your school, your community?**

- Extreme rain ruined our driveway and town road. Twice.
- The floods in southern Vermont More bugs. Rainier and warmer winters
- Increased heat without air conditioning in our school
- extreme weather that impacts events at school,
- losing the winter sports because there is less snow
- Classrooms are so hot in June
- I've noticed positives and negatives over climate change. Our weather is getting more unpredictable and taking away things we love, like snow. But it has brought so many people together where I live

### **What's most important and what feedback do you have for the Council?**

*This section includes results from the Menti polls, comments in the chat, and from plenary discussion.*

#### **Cross-Sector Mitigation**

- Electric vehicles are a positive step, but they still come with emissions from production, high costs, and strain on the electrical grid as well as the consumer. Reducing the number of cars overall – both gas and electric – is even better. More walkable cities like a redesigned Burlington and improved intercity rail could help. For example, trains between Rutland and Burlington exist but aren't frequent or convenient enough to be a viable alternative.
- Is there anything in there about increasing power generation? There's a lot about efficiency, load management, and helping homes electrify, but not much on actually generating more power. You mentioned that around 80% of the state's energy comes from within the state, yet it still doesn't meet demand. Is there anything addressing how to make up that shortfall by building more energy generation?
- Transportation/1
- Transportation/3
- We need a way to sustainably fund these programs (Transportation #1 and #3) without federal support—likely involving some form of taxation—and to encourage consumers to buy electric vehicles without relying solely on taxes. Ideally, this would include giving money back in a way that still motivates people to make the right choice.
- Was refrigerant management mentioned anywhere in the document? It's super important especially if we want to quintuple the amount of AC and heat pumps.

## Cross-Cutting Issues

- Climate change standards in state curriculum
- Increasing climate education
- Apprenticeships
- Adult education
- Education Item 2
- Workforce development 7, 12 and 13
- I think that the education parts are focused too much on teaching the wrong set of people. The ones who already broadly believe. Not that they are bad at all, they are important. But you could get more.
- What is Act 181?

## Rural Resilience and Adaptation

- I think bills like public health 13 that focus on helping community organizations that can help educate communities as well as provide assistance to low income Vermonters after weather events that are sure to come in the near future. Especially in a small state like Vermont I think focusing on reducing emissions is important but it is also especially important to help lower the burden that climate change causes on vulnerable populations.

## Agriculture and Ecosystems

- A lot of the Ag and Eco bills are important when thinking about working with Vermonters and our farming communities. I think bills like ag 1 sound very interesting. Would funding go to farmers to help them implement more sustainable practices?

### General feedback:

- Marketing materials
- Climate change innovation grants
- Promote the positive actions that are becoming implemented besides all the things that still must be done - this can increase hope and engagement in the community
- quick visual that describes lesser known legislation related to draft ideas
- By far the biggest thing is that it references legislation sometimes from other states without explaining them

### Additional comments received in writing:

- I appreciate the Climate Council's goals and believe they will help students become more informed about climate issues. I have been exposed to these goals and have learned about climate change. In my chemistry class, we studied climate change, which was an enjoyable experience, as it covered topics like different types of fuels and oysters.
- Allowing students to choose how deeply they want to study climate change would be beneficial (goal 1: Build off existing resources and programs to create an open-source, accessible, and interdisciplinary climate change curriculum for Vermont educators). Additionally, offering incentives such as helping repay student loans could encourage climate education (goal 9: Target outreach, training, support systems for existing Vermont residents to enter and stay in climate change careers, including farm and forestry, clean energy and resilience careers).
- Cross-cutting #8: I think that it is important to teach and immerse middle schoolers into climate science and teach them about the impacts of climate change because they are at such a young and developing age, what they have learned may stick with them for a long time.
- *What have you experienced or been exposed to in school that relates to these goals?* I have been exposed to an experience at Hildene Farm that is related to goal 9. My family connected me to this as a volunteer and employment opportunity in my local town. As a Vermonter who will be attending higher education in Vermont I was exposed to tending to livestock and growing vegetables for multiple years which influenced me further to pursue a career in wildlife biology. I will most likely move out of Vermont once I am out of college because I want to go to graduate school in Montana to further my education in wildlife biology and management.
- I think one of the goals would be get middle school kids more involved in the workforce career so they can start building. Second goal We also should let students spend a day observing professionals in various industries like climate and career and technology. I think there should be more education on climate change in the workforce place with these things some programs focus on job-shadowing, where students observe professionals in various industries to gain firsthand insights into workplace environments. Others integrate career exploration into middle school curriculum.
- Education #1: I don't remember learning anything about climate in elementary school so I think applying that into schools and getting climate education in young kids is key to a healthy future.
- Workforce #9: I think lots of students leave VT and don't come back. I think we should inspire workforce members who grew up in VT to come back. I have heard about a program at UVM (I think) that supports Vermont students to come back and teach. They do this by forgiving some student loans.
- Summer jobs-> smoky house
- Gaining degrees
- Education #3: feels broad, easy to find loopholes, how to maintain given current administration
- I think the overall goals are constructive to the state, and will inform students better about the climate change and effects of it. I have been exposed to some climate change education in school, but I think it would be beneficial to students to be more immersed

in climate change in their classes. For example, science classes or english classes could add more to their curriculums involving climate change. A couple examples that I have had in school revolving around climate change are writing a paper about energy use in my government class and taking a climate leadership class. I think most of the climate change education is optional for students; they can write a paper about it or take a class on it, but it is optional for students whereas it might be more valuable to make it required.

- Education #2: Personally I feel like it should be more of an optional thing as opposed to a requirement because not everyone is going to want to take classes with relevance to climate change. For example, a kid that wants to be an astrophysicist isn't going to need to know that farmers should be rotating their crops.
- Education #1: I think Vermonters really try to add comments about climate change and people really care about making the world a better place for our future generations. Coming to Vermont has helped me to realize how important climate change, back in my school in Spain Climate change is not a spoken topic and I think Vermont as a state could even make other countries realize how important these movements are.