

Comments on the Draft of the Vermont 2022 Comprehensive Energy Plan

The 2022 CEP is a major step forward from the previous versions. From the first sentence of the Executive Summary the Draft shifts the focus of energy planning to a “transition to a more affordable, cleaner, more efficient, and more reliable energy future.” By deemphasizing sustainability and, to a lesser degree, renewability, the Draft sidesteps controversies about whether an energy transition needs to be driven by running out of oil, gas and coal. After all, if it took hundreds of millions of years to accumulate fossil fuels, why is it reasonable to believe that the world can burn them up in a few centuries?

The Draft also emphasizes local energy production, the role of market forces in promoting change and the need to upgrade the electrical grid. These changes are presented as detailed, realistic plans rather than as graphic “pathways.” The authors have clearly given lots of thought on how these changes should really work.

This is important. The plan will go no where unless it gathers the support of the great majority of Vermonters, and that will not happen without full disclosure.

Controversy. There will be controversy. For example, is wood heat “renewable”? Is it clean? The Associated Press reports that Vermont emits 22 lbs per capita of fine particulate pollution each year. The runner up state, Minnesota, emits half as much. These particles are linked to heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. On the other hand, this Draft calls for continuing to increase “renewable thermal and process heat” beyond the 30% increase the 2016 plan projected for 2025 and proposes a 45% increase in 2032 and a 70% increase by 2042. Are these goals consistent with calls for clean and healthful energy sources?

Judging from a recent online presentation of focus groups about electric vehicles, it will be important to anticipate pushback, though judging by what happened a century ago with motor vehicles, opposition to EV’s may dissipate with time.

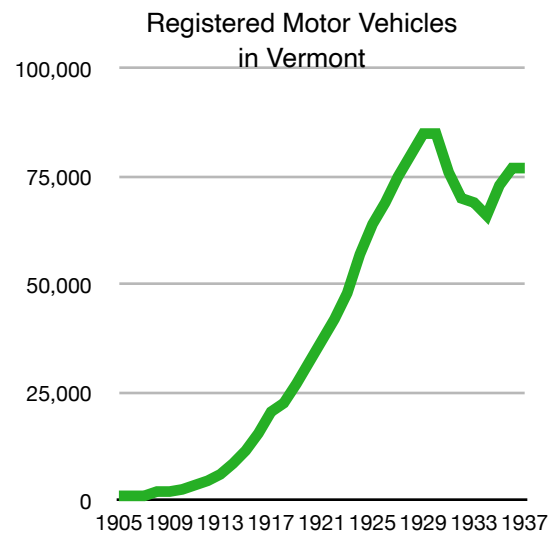
What the Draft Needs. The draft is hard to read. It is verbose. For example: “Transparently articulating how these principles have been applied

will help insure necessary conversation and debate on policy priorities and estimated implications of a given action or set of actions are made on the basis of consistent data and facts.” (page ES-3) Words highlighted in yellow are either derived from Latin or follow the lawyerly habit of redundancy. In short, the Draft needs intensive copy editing!

The way the text is laid out also gets in the way of readability. Running lines of text from one side of the page to the other is an artifact of the age of typewriters. All but the most primitive word processors can format text in multiple columns. A shorter line makes it easier for readers to jump to the next line which makes it easier read continuously and to gulp down words in groups.

If a text is hard to read, people will not read it. If they do not read it, they will oppose it.

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Acceptance of motor vehicles in Vermont 1905–1937. (Note the effect of the depression.) Data source: [Wikipedia: “Vehicle registration plates of Vermont.”](#)