



Fulfilling our Responsibility to be Faithful Stewards of God's Creation Entrusted to our Care

Driving Innovation with Clean Cars for Minnesota

Overview

Minnesota's global warming pollution continues to increase, despite recent commitments from the Legislature and Governor to achieve deep, science-based reductions in emissions. Public demand for global warming solutions that protect God's Creation and improve our economy is growing, and the "Clean Cars" standards recommended by the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MCCAG) will do just that. These state-based vehicle emissions standards, more protective than the federal standard and already adopted by 14 states, would help Minnesota meet the emissions reduction goals put in statute through the passage of the Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 with the important added co-benefits of improving air quality and public health, and saving consumers money at the gas pump. The Transportation and Land Use Working Group of MCCAG evaluated the potential economic and environmental costs and benefits of Minnesota adopting these state-based emissions standards and found that this policy has the potential to reduce more than 13 million metric tons of global warming pollution by 2025, and could save consumers at least \$260 million in reduced fuel costs within that same timeline.

Problem

Minnesota's transportation sector accounts for a quarter of the state's global warming emissions, and more than half of the state's air toxics that contribute to asthma and the degradation of our lakes and rivers. Reducing pollution from on-road vehicles is an important piece of the solution. The best way to ensure Minnesotans have access to cleaner, more efficient vehicles is to require auto manufacturers to sell these certified cleaner cars and trucks in the state. Right now more than 50 percent of Americans live in states that have already adopted the Clean Cars standards, and Minnesotans deserve the opportunity to purchase these cars and trucks, too. Adopting the Clean Cars standards in Minnesota would take a big dent out of global warming pollution and make our cars and trucks more efficient, saving all of us money in the long run.

Position

The 2009 Minnesota Legislature should follow the recommendations of Governor Pawlenty's Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group and adopt the state-based Clean Cars standards. Beginning in 2012, these standards will phase in a requirement that all new cars and light-duty trucks sold or registered in Minnesota be manufactured in a way that results in a 30 percent reduction in emissions, averaged across a manufacturer's fleet, by 2016. Manufacturers can easily meet the Clean Cars standards using existing technologies without compromising performance, weight, or availability of any models of cars, vans, SUVs, or trucks. Adopting these standards is a win-win-win for Minnesota in terms of global warming pollution reduction, air quality improvements and consumer savings.

Building Sensible Communities

Overview

As an important step to protect our Great Outdoors and quality of life, Minnesota set a goal in 2007 of reducing global warming pollution 80 percent by 2050, with an interim goal of 15 percent reduction by 2015. Changes in how we design our communities will be critical for Minnesota to meet this goal. Patterns of development – where and how we grow – have serious consequences for energy use and global warming because they have a profound impact on the amount we drive. Neighborhoods where residents can safely and conveniently walk, bike, take transit, and drive shorter distances to work, stores and schools will help Minnesotans drive less, save more and protect our Great Outdoors by producing less global warming pollution.

Adoption of this legislative package would begin to align Minnesota’s community development policies with the state’s global warming pollution reduction goals. As Minnesota adds 1.2 million people by 2030, decisions about where and how we grow in the future should be informed by the new realities of erratic and rising energy prices, global warming, changing demographics, and the need for fiscally prudent infrastructure investments. Changes in community development policies require neither technological breakthroughs nor large infrastructure investments and can result in big cost savings.

While reducing global warming pollution is the primary goal of this legislative proposal, Minnesotans would also benefit from a host of other economic, environmental and social benefits. These benefits include lower household transportation costs, more efficient use of tax dollars, increased physical activity, expanded housing options, improved water quality and preservation of more farmland and open space. In short, this all adds up to sound stewardship of God’s creation entrusted to our care.

Problem

The evidence is clear that:

- The amount we drive is increasing global warming pollution;
- The average Minnesotan drives much more today than in previous decades largely because of development patterns and a lack of convenient alternatives; and
- Without changes to standard community development practices, driving will continue to rise and we will not be able to meet the state's global warming pollution reduction goals or provide Minnesotans with more transportation and housing choices.

Recent national and statewide evidence makes clear that even with the implementation of new auto efficiency standards and clean fuel standards; we cannot meet global warming pollution reduction goals without changes in community development policies. The Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MCCAG) unanimously recommends improved land use planning and development strategies as an important part of reaching the state's global warming pollution reduction goals set forth by the Next Generation Energy Act of 2007. MCCAG's recent report estimates that fully implementing such strategies could reduce Minnesota global warming emissions by 14.9 million metric tons by 2025.

Position

Building Sensible Communities provides cost-effective and realistic steps that we can take now:

- Create a grant program to support communities in Greater Minnesota that are interested in making changes to their land use planning that would support transportation options;
- Make Minnesota’s adopted global warming pollution reduction targets a goal of the Metropolitan Council’s comprehensive planning process;
- Require MN/DOT to plan for a multi-modal transportation system that can achieve a reduction in per capita vehicle miles driven;
- Eliminate the minimum acreage requirements for new schools; and
- Require consideration of energy use and global warming pollution as part of the environmental review process for transportation and land use projects.