

## **Summary of Climate Change Provisions in State Long-Range Transportation Plans**

### **Summary**

All state DOTs produce long-range transportation plans on a regular cycle. Although not required to incorporate climate change issues, most plans, especially the newer ones, do. The long-range plan gives the DOT an opportunity to partner with other stakeholders and agree on a policy direction in this complicated and sometimes controversial area.

### **Background**

State DOTs are required under federal law to produce statewide long-range transportation plans but not necessarily update them on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup> However, some state laws require periodic updates of plans and plans are often updated voluntarily by state DOTs on a periodic basis. These plans are not required to address climate change issues directly, although they are required to consider factors that “protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.”<sup>4</sup> As a study done for FHWA in 2008 noted, the most recent state long-range plans are increasingly likely to include detailed discussions of climate change issues.<sup>5</sup> For this paper, 10 RGGI+ area state long-range transportation plans were reviewed (see listing of plans at the end of this report). The climate change provisions of these plans can be summarized as follows:

### **Trends and Challenges**

Long-range plans typically present a survey of the trends and challenges facing the state’s transportation system. Seven of the 10 plans reviewed clearly identified climate or greenhouse gas emissions as a trend or challenge.<sup>6</sup> The three oldest plans were the ones that did not. Of the identifiers:

*Maryland* had one of the clearest descriptions of climate change, leading off the environmental section of their plan with the statement “Maryland is committed to understanding and addressing the causes and consequences of climate change.” On the same page they included a pie chart showing the contribution of the transportation sector to greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

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<sup>3</sup> 23 USC 135

<sup>4</sup> 23 USC 135(d)(1)(E)

<sup>5</sup> *Integrating Climate Change into the Transportation Planning Process*, Final Report, July 2008, prepared by ICF International, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/climatechange>. This study (“ICF report”) surveyed both state and MPO long-range plans to determine some of the current practices and possible future trends.

<sup>6</sup> Compared to 6 out of 12 plans reviewed in the ICF report.

*New Hampshire*, by contrast, identified the prospect of “more environmental regulations” as the challenge to be dealt with in regard to climate change issues.

Although several states mentioned climate change adaptation as an issue, for *Rhode Island* it outweighed climate change mitigation as a challenge.

## **Visions and Goals**

Long-range plans also normally contain vision and goals statements, which identify long-term aspirations. Seven of the 11 plans have clear climate change statements that fall into this category.<sup>7</sup> These are most often found in environmental stewardship sections, though they are sometimes attached to the topic of energy conservation.

## **Policies and Strategies**

Policies and strategies are more specific and measurable statements that are intended to guide agency actions. Eight of the 10 plans had direct climate change or greenhouse gas references in this category.<sup>8</sup> Most of them linked proposed transportation policies and strategies to climate change action plans in their state (or sometimes to energy plans). Where these measures were identified in detail, they included the typical initiatives of more transit, more transportation demand measures, and so on. Notably, three states directly addressed the “hot button” issue of VMT reduction:

*Connecticut* promised to “achieve a 3% reduction in VMT below the 2020 baseline.”

*Maine* adopted a policy to “Reduce VMT and related air emissions through commuter options.”

*Rhode Island* said it would “Reduce emissions of air pollution and green house gases from mobile sources and conserve energy by reducing vehicle miles traveled” and other measures.

## **Performance Measures**

Although “performance based planning” is an important trend in planning theory, only two of the long-range plans reviewed, *Maryland* and *Rhode Island*, explicitly identified greenhouse gas emissions as a performance measure.<sup>9</sup>

## **Outlook**

Development of a long-range transportation plan gives a state DOT an opportunity to interact with a broader array of stakeholders, including citizen’s groups and other agencies, than it may

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<sup>7</sup> Five of 12 in the ICF report.

<sup>8</sup> Six of 12 in the ICF report.

<sup>9</sup> Zero of 12 in the ICF report.

have in the normal course of business. DOTs have very wide discretion in developing their long-range plans, providing they meet the minimum federal requirements. Agency heads might consider taking advantage of this opportunity to build new partnerships, especially in the sensitive area of climate change policy, where DOTs have not historically been primary stakeholders. The publication of a long-range plan also gives the DOT a chance to broach difficult and controversial issues in a broader, longer-range context. In the short term, DOT agency heads can identify the status of their department's long-range planning cycle and look for opportunities to address climate change issues.

#### **Plans reviewed:**

##### **Connecticut**

Connecticut on the Move: Strategic Long-Range Transportation Plan, June 2009

<http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=3531&q=259760>

##### **Delaware**

[to be completed]

##### **Maine**

*Connecting Maine*, December 2008 Final Draft

<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/connectingmaine/index.htm>

##### **Maryland**

2009 Maryland Transportation Plan, January 2009

<http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/Planning/index>

##### **Massachusetts**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2006

<http://www.eot.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/longplanIndex&sid=level2>

##### **New Hampshire**

New Hampshire Long-Range Transportation Plan, May 2008

<http://www.nh.gov/dot/org/projectdevelopment/planning/lrtbp.htm>

##### **New Jersey**

Transportation Choices 2030: New Jersey's Long-Range Transportation Plan, October 2008

<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/works/njchoices/>

##### **New York**

Strategies for a New Age: New York State's Transportation Master Plan for 2030, November 2006

<https://www.nysdot.gov/main/transportation-plan/transportation-plan>

##### **Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania Mobility Plan: Leading Transportation Change, 2006-2030, Direction Document, June 2007

<http://www.pamobilityplan.com/>

##### **Rhode Island**

Transportation 2030, August 2008

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/transportation/default.htm>

##### **Vermont**

Vermont Long Range Transportation Business Plan, March 2009

<http://vtplan.rsginc.com/>