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- U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization
- Blueprint Fact Sheet

Climate Action

The U.S. transportation sector is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector of our economy. The effects of climate change are already impacting how we travel and damaging our infrastructure. That means the transportation sector, and the US Department of Transportation, can and must be one of the biggest parts of the solution to the climate crisis. Climate change presents huge challenges, and real opportunities to build a better transportation system. Addressing climate change is one of the top priorities of the Department of Transportation.

The transportation sector is the largest domestic contributor to climate change.

The U.S. transportation sector is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector of our economy. In 2019, transportation accounted for 33% of emissions in the United States – and that statistic doesn't even account for the full lifecycle of transportation-related emissions, such as the emissions from building our transportation infrastructure. Therefore, the transportation sector must play a big role in tackling climate change. And in the process, we can build a transportation system that is cleaner, more sustainable, and works better for everyone.

Climate change is already impacting the transportation sector.

While we are addressing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, we must also ensure that transportation infrastructure is resilient to the impacts of climate change that are already here, and worsening.

The rising temperatures, fires, droughts, flooding, and severe weather that are exacerbated by climate change are already putting stress on the nation's transportation infrastructure. The need is everywhere—we see it in the sections of California's Highway 1 that fell into the ocean; in the Gulf Coast flooding that halted rail service after Hurricane Harvey. We see it in the floods in Michigan, the wildfires in California, the deadly snowstorm in Texas, the I-5 buckling in the Pacific Northwest, and increased risks of flooding and heat waves across the country. We saw mudslides in Colorado that had followed a year of extreme wildfires. We've seen flash floods in communities that threaten the safety of drivers and extreme storms that have closed ports for weeks at a time. These impacts are projected to worsen, with eight of the ten most destructive hurricanes of all time happening in the last ten years. And the effects of climate change often have a more detrimental effect on vulnerable populations and can disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities. It is crucial that we make our systems more able to withstand the shocks that a changing climate will bring.

The Department of Transportation is taking action on climate.

The Department of Transportation is committed to doing its part to meet the President's climate commitments to ensure a 50-52% reduction in US emissions by 2030, and a net-zero economy by 2050. The Department's Strategic Plan identifies climate and sustainability as a top priority in the coming years. The Department is working hard to build a transportation system that mitigates the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, is resilient to the impacts of climate change, and advances climate and environmental justice.

Reducing Transportation Emissions

To reduce emissions, the Department is implementing several strategies, including:

1. Working with partners to enhance land use planning that can make it possible for people to take fewer trips, or to walk and bike on those trips.
2. Implementing large investments in passenger rail, public transit, and active transportation infrastructure to allow people to use more energy efficient forms of transportation.
3. Leaning in to ensure that all modes of transportation—from aviation to shipping to pipelines to cars—are moving towards a decarbonized future.
4. Using all available transportation tools to reduce emissions, including through promoting the use of renewable energy in highway rights-of-way.

Building Resilient Infrastructure

The Department is also ensuring that transportation infrastructure is built to be resilient to climate change. In October 2021, USDOT released an updated Climate Action Plan that focuses on actions to bolster adaptation and increase resilience. This Plan builds from the previous Climate Action Plans and identifies 5 priority actions the Department will focus on:

- Incorporate Resilience into DOT Grant and Loan Programs;
- Enhance Resilience Throughout the Project Planning and Development Process;
- Ensure Resiliency of DOT Facilities and Operational Assets;
- Ensure Climate-ready Services and Supplies; and
- Improve Climate Education and Research on Resilience.

The plan also has sections on agency actions to enhance resilience at DOT facilities and ensure climate-ready supply of products and services, as well as an emphasis on climate change and equity.

Ensuring environmental and climate justice

The United States has historically seen an unequal distribution of benefits and burdens from transportation systems, disproportionally impacting historically underserved or overburdened communities. Low- and medium-income and minority households tend to have less access to convenient and affordable transportation options, and communities that are overburdened and historically underserved are exposed to a disproportionate amount of air pollution and other environmental hazards.

A long history of federal policies has shaped our transportation system, profoundly influencing the ways its benefits and burdens are distributed. Recognizing this, the Department is committed to addressing the disproportionate negative environmental impacts of transportation on disadvantaged communities. The Department is focused on:

- Reducing exposure to hazardous materials and waste, harmful emissions, and noise impacts on disadvantaged and overburdened communities.
- Increasing availability and access to clean transportation options, including affordable EVs, charging stations, transit, and bicycle and walking paths.
- Mitigating urban heat island effects.
- Improving environmental justice and integrate climate justice into environmental review processes.
- Reducing exposure to noise pollution, criteria pollutants, and other transportation impacts on communities and ecosystems.
- Supporting innovative programs, policies, and projects to reduce environmental impacts associated with freight movements.
- Improving NEPA implementation and environmental outcomes through effective and efficient project delivery.

USDOT’s Tools

DOT is using all available tools to achieve these mitigation, resilience, and environmental justice goals: data and research, policies and guidance, partnerships and stakeholder engagement, regulatory options, and more. The Department also runs a Climate Change Center, which convenes members of all of the Operating Administrations to ensure our efforts on climate are coordinated, comprehensive, and

cohesive.

To read more about the Department's specific efforts to address climate change, please check out recent press releases here.

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