



MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
November 18, 2020
Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 by CJ Hoss. The meeting was recorded.

Committee Members Present

CJ Hoss, Chair, Pittsfield

Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington

Andrew Groff, Williamstown

Kyle Hanlon, North Adams

Eleanor Tillinghast, Mount Washington (non-Commission member)

BRPC Staff Present

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director

Laura Brennan, Senior Planner

Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager

Alexander Valentini, Economic Development Researcher

Guests Present

Christine Kirby, MA Department of Environmental Protection, Assistant Commissioner

II. Approval of September 14th, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Andrew Groff's municipal affiliation on the September 14th, 2020 meeting minutes was corrected from "North Adams" to "Williamstown".

Chris R. moved to approve the minutes of the September 14th, 2020 meeting. Eleanor T. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) – Guest speaker Christine Kirby, Assistant Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Christine K. introduced herself and shared a slideshow regarding the TCI with the Committee via Zoom. She said she has been involved with the TCI since its conception in 2010 and has chaired the technical and analysis workgroup since 2018.

Presentation Information

TCI was founded in 2010 with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, similar to how the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) has worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector. TCI consists of 12 Northeast and mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NY, PA, NJ, MD, DE, VA).

Transportation is the source of 43% of CO₂ emissions in the TCI region.

TCI region stats: 72 million people, \$5.3T GDP, 52 million registered vehicles.

The modelled TCI cap of 254 MMT of CO₂ covers more than 3 times the emissions regulated by RGGI.

The TCI draft MOU was published at the end of 2019. The final MOU was meant to be published in Spring 2020, but COVID-19 has delayed it to late Fall 2020. The cap and investment program may start as early as 2022, and the cap will continue to decline for a decade after it begins.

TCI differs from a gas tax in that a gas tax is constant and legislatively difficult to change. TCI, by contrast, is a market-based program with a decreasing cap, which guarantees emissions reductions over time.

Benefits in addition to reduction of CO₂ emissions include reduction in criteria air pollutants, green industry growth, public health savings, and avoided climate disaster damages.

TCI contains a strong focus on equity with a dedication to transparency, community participation, and funding for overburdened and underserved communities.

Committee Questions and Comments

Eleanor T. asked Christine K. if the average cost increase for a gallon of fuel at the pump has been modelled. Christine K. said the final increase depends on cap size, cap reduction aggressiveness, and market conditions, but that the models show a range from \$0.05 to \$0.17 per gallon.

Eleanor T. asked Christine K. if Governor Baker was obligated to proceed with TCI if he signed the MOU. Christine K. said the MOU is non-binding.

Tom M. and CJ H. expressed concern over the impact of the program on Berkshire County given the county's rural circumstances such as lack of public transit, low population density, dependence on privately owned automobiles, and lower household incomes. Christine K. said these considerations are being kept in mind during program design.

Christine K. asked for clarification on the letter BRPC and the Committee is drafting. Tom M. said it is a public comment letter for submission to TCI.

Sheila I. asked if rural communities are included in equity considerations. Christine K. said that they are.

CJ H. asked if it has been considered that municipalities such as Pittsfield have large, gasoline-dependent, fleets. Christine K. said that TCI can be an opportunity for fleet conversion due to the funding it will generate for fleet conversion grant programs.

Eleanor T. asked how much revenue the program will generate for Massachusetts. Christine T. said it cannot be determined until program variables are set (cap size, cap reduction aggressiveness, plus market conditions), but that it will be hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Eleanor T. asked if it has been determined how revenues would be distributed to different counties, for instance, by population or gallons of fuel combusted. Christine K. said the

distribution scheme has not yet been determined.

Tom M. asked if the cap allowances are different per state. Christine K. said that they will be the same throughout the TCI region.

Christine K. left the meeting.

Public Comments Letter

Eleanor T. said that the price increase in gasoline is going to affect Berkshire County residents significantly, and that the letter must contain insistence that revenues will accrue to Berkshire County. The costs of the program cannot be carried by Berkshire County residents if they are unlikely to benefit from the resultant investment.

Tom M. said that he would like more clarification on the "overburdened and underserved communities" language in the equity portion of TCI.

Eleanor T. said that the language in the letter needs to be strong regarding the equitable distribution of funds to Berkshire County.

Andrew G. mentioned that even though revenues might accrue to grant programs available to Berkshire County municipalities, some of the most vulnerable municipalities do not even have the staff capacity to be aware and take advantage of such programs.

Andrew G. said that Berkshire County needs a representative on the committees/other bodies determining program details, and in particular revenue distribution.

CJ H. said that the letter should stress past inequities Berkshire County has endured, MBTA funding in particular.

Kyle H. moved that BRPC staff amend the letter to stress past inequities Berkshire County has endured, make clear that Berkshire County expects at least an equitable distribution of revenues, and request that Berkshire County is given representation in the bodies determining program details, and submit the letter to the Commission for approval. Sheila I. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Topics for Future Consideration

Eleanor T. asked Tom M. to circulate any available information regarding solar PILOTS or tax payments to municipalities to committee members.

V. Next Committee Meeting Date – Wednesday, December 16th, 2020 at 4pm

Tom M. said that there likely will not be anything urgent the Committee needs to address by December 16th. The meeting will therefore be postponed to January 27th, 2021. If something urgent arises, the December 16th meeting date will be honored.

Laura B. will email the Committee about the changed meeting date.

VI. Adjournment

Kyle H. moved to adjourn the meeting. Eleanor T. seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:22.