



March 18, 2021

Kathleen Theoharides, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Re: REQUEST FOR COMMENT ON CLEAN ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLAN FOR 2030

Dear Secretary Theoharides:

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is pleased to submit comments on the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 presented by The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). BRPC appreciates the efforts of EOEAA to establish aggressive GHG reduction goals and provide a pathway to achieve them that prioritizes equity and affordability. Berkshire County is more rural than much of the state and relies on its abundance of natural resources to support a tourism-based economy. Therefore, our utmost priority is to achieve our region's share of GHG emissions reductions while preserving its natural beauty to remain a recreational destination and preserve quality of life for residents. With that as our guiding principle, BRPC offers the following comments on the strategies outlined in the CECP:

Chapter 2. Transforming Our Transportation Systems

Chapter 2. General Comment

The reduction of the Commonwealth's total GHG emissions by 45% from the transportation sector is extremely ambitious and it is expected that the majority of these emission reductions will come from electrifying light duty vehicles. Based on the information presented, medium and heavy-duty vehicles receive less focus for a variety of reasons and this raises equity concerns. Furthermore, at a time when the State legislature is pushing for greater emissions reductions, every vehicle classification/type should be considered as candidates for clean vehicle technology. Vehicle manufacturers have a reputation for delaying the delivery of clean vehicle technology for medium and heavy-duty vehicles even when required by federal legislation. By allowing exceptions and additional time for vehicle manufacturers to bring clean vehicles to the marketplace, it will guarantee that emission reduction targets will not be met.

The document indicates that the availability of light duty vehicles will increase along with a greater variety of types including pick-up trucks. It is stated that vehicle charge range will continue to increase and that the vehicle market has brought down the costs of EVs. Although battery technology has assisted with efforts to increase vehicle range, the cost of a new vehicle is significant and new vehicle costs increase with each successive model year. Even if the economy continues to grow at a modest rate, personal wealth/salaries will also need to increase in order for the light duty fleet electrification strategy to be successful. The strategy is filled with risk as it is highly dependent on 750,000 to 1 million all electric vehicles being deployed into the State's light duty fleet over the coming decade. We do not believe that the majority of Berkshire County residents will be able to afford new electric vehicles in the timeframe called for by this plan. We previously have shared this concern. Attached to this correspondence is a copy of BRPC's comment letter on the TCI initiative

which provides more details on this as well as other rural area concerns related to GHG emission reductions from the transportation sector.

One item that is noticeably missing from the discussion are the anticipated costs. All of the strategy actions will have a cost and this cost will be borne by residents and ratepayers. As transportation costs increase for businesses, these costs will be passed on to the consumer. There is no discussion on the impact that this will have. Developing policy without a full understanding of the financial impacts is troubling and can lead to unintended consequences such as program abandonment or emission reduction goals not being attained.

Many of the strategies and actions within this section as well as the rest of the plan are overarching and involve numerous state agencies. More involvement by additional state agencies should occur. With respect to transportation, MassDOT can take a more active role in this effort along with EEA and MassDEP.

The following section outlines our comments on the strategies and policies for the transportation section of the *Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2030* (Chapter 2). The format restates the strategy and summarizes the information that is provided. It concludes with a discussion of concerns, issues and level of support for the strategy and strategy actions.

Chapter 2. Strategy T1

This strategy directly relates to Transportation and Climate Initiative Program to reduce emissions from the transportation sector. T1 Strategy Actions include signing on to the TCI program with implementation in 2023 and then development of a regional low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) with implementation no later than 2036.

The LCFS effort is essentially a requirement for bio diesel fuel. Bio diesel fuel has been used successfully by fleets in numerous regions across the country and it continues to be utilized by fleets. No reason or justification is given for waiting until 2036 for its implementation and BRPC encourages moving up this implementation date. Previously, BRPC submitted comments on the TCI initiative outlining disparate impacts to rural areas. BRPC is using this opportunity to again draw attention to our concerns.

A copy of our letter outlining our concerns is attached.

Chapter 2. Strategy T2

Included in this strategy is the adoption of California standards for light duty vehicles and the requirement that 100% of all new light duty vehicles sold in Massachusetts in 2035 be Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV). Also, MassDEP will be required to adopt and implement ZEV purchase mandate for Advance Clean Truck and Fleets rule by December 2021. MassDEP will work with 16 other states on an action plan for achieving 30% of all new truck and bus sales being ZEV by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

The T2 strategy actions are very ambitious. There is no way to determine if the vehicle manufacturers will be able to deliver the quantity and types of vehicles that are called for by 2035 and 2050. In 2020, only 375,000 plug-in electric vehicles were sold to US consumers. Even with the provisions of federal legislation and the Clean Air Act, automakers have been able to gain reprieve from similar requirements in the past. Historically, medium and heavy-duty vehicles have escaped

lower or ZEV emission requirements. The low requirement that 30% of all new trucks and buses sold in 2030 be ZEV further exacerbates an inequity as all light duty vehicles sold in 2035 must be ZEV. The mandates related to medium and heavy-duty vehicles should be accelerated. Finally, MassDEP should seek assistance from MassDOT to work with all regional transit agencies to begin acquiring ZEV buses now and not wait until 2030.

Chapter 2. Strategy T3

This strategy is directly focused on reducing the cost of ZEV purchases. The Commonwealth has established an incentive program (MOR-EV Program) that currently provides \$2,500 rebate for the purchase/lease of a new BEV (battery electric vehicle) or FCEV (fuel cell electric vehicle) and a \$1,500 for PHEV (plug in hybrid electric vehicle).

The Strategy Actions for T3 include exploration of providing MOR-EV rebates at point of sale, investigating the development of a low and moderate income consumer program for ZEVs, developing a heavy duty ZEV incentive program. These strategy actions appear to offer great potential in reducing up front purchase costs and increasing the number of EVs in operation. However, funding for this program is not from a dedicated source, and in 2019, rebates were temporarily halted until funding was extended. This strategy action does not specify the amount of funding that will be available which can negatively impact the success of this program. The Volkswagen Settlement Fund which totaled \$75M, is not a viable long- term source of funding for this strategy. TCI-P revenue also does not appear to be able to provide significant incentives and rebates. The report does make mention of the federal tax credit that serves as an incentive; however, some vehicle manufacturers have exhausted their allocation and therefore, this cost savings incentive has limited applicability in the future.

The low and moderate income consumer program and heavy duty ZEV incentive program appear to offer potential in reducing emissions; more information should have been provided on this strategy action. As Berkshire County income levels are well below the statewide average, BRPC strongly supports the concept for such a program which reduces or eliminates the financial hardship from acquiring a new, clean technology electric vehicle.

Consideration should also be given to increasing the rebate/incentive for ZEVs and removing the rebate for hybrid vehicles. Hybrid vehicles still use an internal combustion engine which produce GHG emissions and there is no way to limit these emissions. Larger incentives for ZEV purchases would help to accelerate purchases and assist with reducing the purchase cost burden.

Chapter 2. Strategy T4

The intention is apparent, this strategy addresses electric vehicle charging infrastructure and related logistical matters including the preferred time period for vehicle charging.

T4 Strategy Actions include exploring a utility based residential charging incentive program, how to improve direct current fast charging (DCFC) financial viability through pilot programs and revised rate structures and exploring time varying rates and active demand response programs. We agree with the premise that the majority of charging should occur during off peak periods typically overnight at the vehicle owner's home. However, there are circumstances where this may not be possible and that charging will need to occur at alternate locations and times. Rates for charging vehicles at off peak times should be set at the lowest possible amount to serve as an incentive to acquire and use EVs. Absent from the Strategy Action is a requirement that utility providers play a

more active role to promote and construct EV supply equipment. In addition to requiring that they hire additional personnel specifically to promote EV use and infrastructure deployment, annual progress reports should be required to identify successes and future opportunities. BRPC is in full agreement with the rationale for smart charging and supports the outlined efforts.

Chapter 2. Strategy T5

This strategy is intended to inform consumers and fleet owners about the additional benefits of EVs along with providing education and technical assistance. Communicating this information can play an important role in gaining acceptance of clean vehicle technologies and further implementation efforts as there is an urgency to begin transitioning to the use of this new vehicle technology immediately.

Both EEA and MassCEC need to step up their efforts related to the Strategy Actions. This strategy is crucial, new staff should be hired to assist with Accelerating Clean Transportation Now (ACTNow) program efforts. Staff should be assigned to regions (Western Mass., Central Mass., Northeast Mass., Southeast Mass. and Boston metro) and they should also reside within their region. In doing so, it is more efficient, time is not wasted traveling from Boston to a region and this reduction in travel also reduces GHG emissions. These new staff members can also serve to coordinate and monitor the activities of the Eversource and National Grid in their efforts to establish EVSE. It is also noticeable that the Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition, the state entity charged with promoting alternative clean technology vehicles, has been absent in this effort.

Chapter 2. Strategy T6

This strategy targets the expected, continued increase in VMT from light duty vehicles that will contribute to GHG emissions and encourages increasing the density of development.

The majority of VMT associated with light duty vehicles is directly attributed to commuting. The focus of the strategy actions is aimed at reducing single occupancy vehicle trips (from commuting) and encouraging/incentivizing Smart Growth policies. These actions are more applicable to urban areas and can be difficult to implement in rural areas. Furthermore, the lack of funding for transit, especially in rural areas, limits the ability to promote transit as an alternative mode of transportation to reduce VMT and GHG emissions. A Smart Growth policy package needs to recognize the unique differences of rural area and it is recommended that this policy be developed in conjunction with the State's Rural Policy Advisory Committee.

The description provided about the strategy action lacks details and specificity. As such, until more information is provided, BRPC cannot support this action as it has the potential to negatively impact rural areas.

Chapter 3. Transforming Our Buildings

The following section outlines our comments on the strategies and policies for the building sector portion of the *Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2030* (Chapter 3). The format restates the strategy and summarizes the information that is provided. It concludes with a discussion of concerns, issues and level of support for the strategy and strategy actions.

Chapter 3. Strategy B1

This strategy considers the life cycle of buildings and their appliances and proposes measures to steer

new construction and appliances away from fossil fuel dependence through a phased approach by 2028.

While BRPC is in support of a high-performance stretch energy code as an important component for statewide decarbonization efforts, we would like to see this plan place greater emphasis on retrofitting older homes. Berkshire County has a high percentage of aging housing stock, and there is less new construction taking place in our region compared with much of the state. For example, Berkshire County experienced a -0.8% population change from 2018-2019, and authorized only 1.5% of the Commonwealth's building permits that year.

As this plan gets executed over the coming years, it will be important to recognize that the new energy code will be more impactful in certain regions across the Commonwealth and do little to realize meaningful GHG emissions reductions in others. We appreciate the acknowledgement that building envelope improvement retrofits of existing building stock must rapidly scale over the next several decades. We would like to see these types of improvements, as well as measures to eliminate clean energy adoption barriers, more heavily incentivized and costs reduced.

Chapter 3. Strategy B2

This strategy outlines strategy actions to achieve widespread retrofits to enable electrification and envelope upgrades of 75% of existing building stock by 2050.

Deploying heat pumps and building envelope upgrades to the majority of residential buildings across the Commonwealth over the next 30 years is an ambitious target. Our region is already suffering from a dearth of tradespeople, a problem that exists across the Commonwealth and is expected to get worse in the coming years. This lack of contractors and related professionals is creating barriers for Berkshire County residents, especially those that are low-to-moderate income, to access the current Mass Save and related incentives.

Training and certification will not suffice to address this problem. Rather, systemic change needs to occur at the state level to address the regulatory barriers put in place that have over time de-incentivized people from entering the trades. Lengthy apprenticeship requirements with low wages, among other reasons, are deterring individuals from entering the trades. This not only raises costs for consumers but encourages unpermitted work. BRPC recommends that this plan include a regulatory review of these policies and that this review looks at the regulations of neighboring states that do not face this issue as precedents.

BRPC is also surprised to see no mention of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program in the plan as a concrete way to cut GHG emissions in the commercial and industrial building sector. While we appreciate that the plan acknowledges emissions need to be drastically reduced in these building sectors, the plan lacks specific approaches to doing so. Commercial and industrial property owners need to be educated on this program and any barriers to accessing it should be investigated and addressed.

Chapter 3. Strategy B3

This strategy discusses the first step in implementing the statutory, regulatory, and financing tools needed to promote the development of clean heating solutions for buildings, which will be the

formation of a clean heat task force. This strategy also details the priorities that this task force will assume.

BRPC is in support of the Administration's Commission and Task Force's consideration of zero up-front capital solutions for clean energy technologies for low income and affordable housing residents. However, we feel that this should be expanded for middle-income households as up-front costs may deter this population from adopting clean energy technologies as well.

Chapter 4. Transforming Our Energy Supply

The following section outlines our comments on the strategies and policies for the energy supply section of the *Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2030* (Chapter 4). The format restates the strategy and summarizes the information that is provided. It concludes with a discussion of concerns, issues and level of support for the strategy and strategy actions.

Chapter 4. Strategy E3

This strategy includes methods to modify the Commonwealth's attribute markets so that they better correspond with one another and with activity in regional markets.

As part of DOER's 2022 review of current attribute markets, BRPC would like to see metrics and terminology used by each program standardized. Due to this lack of standardization, there is currently no easy way to compare programs. We ask that the final version of this plan address this issue.

Chapter 4. Strategy E4

This strategy describes methods that various state agencies will pursue to facilitate widespread solar deployment throughout the state.

BRPC recognizes and supports that the deployment of solar generation as well as other clean energy resources will need to be rapid and widespread over the next several decades to meet 2050 energy demands. We appreciate this plan's acknowledgement that deploying a minimum of 40 GW of solar resources across 60,000+ acres of land conflicts with important land use goals such as protecting critical habitats and ecosystems, and the two endeavors must be carefully coordinated. BRPC has concerns that regions west of I-495, including Berkshire County, will be disproportionately tapped for solar and storage siting compared to the rest of the state due to the greater availability of undeveloped and/or less expensive land.

As mentioned throughout the CECP, forests play an important role in carbon sequestration and storage. Berkshire County is home to a high percentage of the pristine woodland that provides carbon storage for the Commonwealth. The Mohawk Woodland Trails Partnership is an ongoing Northwestern Massachusetts focused initiative that began in 2013 and is currently exploring carbon sequestration in the region as a viable revenue stream for municipal and private landowners. The environmental and economic benefits of our region's forested land for the Commonwealth should be recognized when siting solar across the state.

We believe that SMART regulations currently incentivize utilities to pursue solar development in the western part of the state. As mentioned in the beginning of this letter, given our tourism-based economy, environmental constraints, and desire to maintain quality of life standards, we are concerned this development will negatively impact the future of our region. From a resiliency standpoint, the State needs to pursue generation as close to where it's being used as possible. With the load centers primarily cited in the eastern part of the state, more local generation will help prevent grid failures as we've seen occur in other parts of the state and increase resiliency. For all these reasons, equitable siting across the Commonwealth must be pursued.

BRPC supports the prioritization of the built environment over natural landscapes for solar and storage siting. Our region has an overabundance of suburban parking lots, as does much of the state, that would be prime locations for solar. We also think that more needs to be done to enable solar siting on both residential and commercial buildings.

As previously mentioned, Berkshire County has a large amount of aging housing stock. A portion of this housing has suffered deferred maintenance and would require repairs and a range of barrier mitigation measures to become solar-ready. On top of zero upfront capital solutions, other types of incentives, including barrier mitigation and structural repairs, must be heavily incentivized to make solar a feasible option in these cases.

We would also like to see this plan explore incentives for larger commercial-scale rooftop solar arrays. If it is not already slated for inclusion, building codes moving forward should require large commercial structures to be built ready for large-scale arrays. Small-scale net metering development on smaller commercial properties as a way to increase grid resiliency will also become critically important, and so smaller-scale commercial solar adoption should be incentivized as well.

EEA and DOER should put pressure on the utilities immediately to upgrade their infrastructure. Ensuring that widespread solar deployment is coupled with affordable and practical connection to the utility grid will be an important step to realizing the Commonwealth's goal of widespread electrification as well as streamlining the process for the consumer.

BRPC has observed unintended consequences of solar becoming a protected use under Chapter 40A. While we believe that the solar permitting process needs to be streamlined, we think that regulatory control should be restored at the local level. With little ability to weed out detrimental solar projects or incentivize beneficial ones, some communities have been forced to restrict the development of solar.

Chapter 4. Strategy E5

This strategy establishes offshore wind as the most reliable and feasible path forward for development of the Commonwealth's wind industry.

BRPC supports the development of the Commonwealth's offshore wind industry and believes offshore is the best source for wind energy. Given our priority to preserve the natural and recreational resources of our region, our tourism-based economy, and quality of life for our residents, we think offshore wind is the most sustainable path forward.

We also support MassCEC's efforts to build local supply chains. MassCEC should investigate ways to more equitably distribute the economic benefits that will accompany the growth of this industry throughout the Commonwealth without pursuing onshore wind.

Chapter 5. Mitigating Other Sources of Emissions

The following section outlines our comments on the strategies and policies for the other sources of emissions section of the *Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2030* (Chapter 5). The format restates the strategy and summarizes the information that is provided. It concludes with a discussion of concerns, issues and level of support for the strategy and strategy actions.

Chapter 5. Strategy N2

This strategy describes ways to reduce non-energy emissions through enforcement of best practices in the waste, wastewater, and agriculture sectors and stricter emissions standards for Municipal Waste Combustor rebuilds or renovations. This strategy presents a goal of 90% waste reduction by 2050 that was established in the Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, and mentions the diversion of certain materials from the waste stream as a method for achieving this reduction.

We appreciate the aggressive goal cited in this plan from the 2030 SWMP of reducing solid waste by 90% by 2050. However, this seems unrealistic without a major system overhaul. Waste management as it's currently handled is burdensome to local municipalities that lack the resources to deal with increases in solid waste and creates a disjointed approach. In light of international waste management issues that have yet to be solved, we feel that further State involvement is necessary to achieve the goal of 90% waste reduction over the next 30 years. Municipalities do not have capacity to address these issues at the local level.

While providing technical and financial assistance for municipalities as cited in the 2030 SWMP will certainly be beneficial, we don't believe it will be sufficient. State-run facilities should be considered to shift reliance away from commercial waste management which can be unreliable in both the short and long-term.

Chapter 6. Protecting our Natural and Working Lands

The following section outlines our comments on the strategies and policies for the natural and working lands section of the *Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2030* (Chapter 6). This section begins with a general comment that originated through the consideration of land use strategies outlined in this section but is applicable to the plan as a whole. Then, the format restates the strategy and summarizes the information that is provided. It concludes with a discussion of concerns, issues and level of support for the strategy and strategy actions.

Chapter 6. General Comment

BRPC supports many of the land use and management strategies outlined in this chapter. However, we think it's critical that the State develop a comprehensive land use plan that involves all relevant State agencies instead of continuing to pursue these strategies piecemeal through disparate planning initiatives. Without a coordinated, interagency approach, the efficacy of the strategies not only in this chapter but throughout this plan will be stymied.

We think it's important to better acknowledge the interconnectedness of our built and natural systems and address the issues included in this plan accordingly. While it is important that communities maintain control at the local level, there is a need for a state-wide land use plan to give communities the tools to better enforce these important preservation and management goals. A Statewide Land Use Plan could be a guiding document that would provide a consistent framework to base other plans upon and avoid conflicts.

Chapter 6. Strategy L1

This strategy outlines various initiatives intended to conserve farmland, forests, and wetlands.

BRPC appreciates the dedication to protecting our natural and working lands and quality of the environment as a way of increasing resiliency to climate change. Current real estate development trends and market pressures are particularly concerning from a land conservation perspective. Our region in particular has been experiencing heightened development pressure from both Boston and New York.

Given these trends as well as the severity of the climate emergency, we believe that the goal of achieving “no net loss” of farmland by 2030 is not sufficient and without a more active tracking mechanism may not be achievable. To achieve “no net loss” or more aggressive forest and farmland conservation goals, this plan should develop tracking metrics to ensure these goals can actually be met.

These comments were prepared before the climate change legislation being prepared by the Massachusetts General Court was finalized. They only respond to the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 presented by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for comment on December 30, 2020.

These comments were approved by the BRPC Commission at its meeting on March 18, 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Matuszko', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Matuszko, AICP
Executive Director