

# CAPITOL-TO-CAPITOL

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## AIR QUALITY

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## INVESTMENTS TO REDUCE AIR AND CLIMATE POLLUTION

This Air Quality Team Policy Issue Paper describes our Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program (CPRG) priorities and advocates for congressional support for 24 distinct measures in the region's CPRG application.

### Requested Actions

Support for investments to implement 10 Built Environment Measures:

- Land use improvements by encouraging increased residential density and infill housing development programs.
- Build energy efficiency improvements by requiring new and existing construction to install ENERGY STAR-certified appliances.
- Increase use of renewable energy in new and existing construction by requiring new and encouraging existing development projects to install and generate surplus renewable energy onsite.
- Build decarbonization and electrification by deploying new commercial or residential developments with renewable energy.
- Reduce construction and landscape emissions by promoting use of electric or hybrid powered construction equipment, cleaner fuel construction equipment, and replacement of gas-powered landscape equipment with zero-emission electric equivalent units when they are available.
- Encourage cool pavement to replace dark pavement.
- Increase recycling services for greater waste reduction and implement organic diversion programs.
- Reduce water utility emissions by promoting low-flow water fixtures, water-efficient landscapes, and reducing or avoiding turf grass.

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- Reduce wastewater emissions through methane capture.
- Develop new partnership for an edible food recovery program including food service establishments, wholesale providers, and retail sources.

## Support for investments to implement eight Transportation Measures

- Increase new charging infrastructure that encourages electric vehicle and ZEV adoption.
- Expand public transit improvements and existing network coverage and hours of service.
- Launch first bus rapid transit system for the region.
- Improve roadways for multi-modal use and access, increase sidewalk coverage to improve pedestrian access, build new and improve existing bike boulevards, and increase interconnectivity and length of existing bike networks.
- Implement transportation demand management program for voluntary or mandatory commute trip reduction programs, ridesharing, and discounted or free transit passes.
- Activate modes of transportation for youth including new sidewalks, bike lanes, off-street pathways, and street crossings.
- Introduce a school bus program targeting occupancy of 25 students per bus.
- Introduce a new electric bikeshare program that converts transient existing conventional bikes to electric to increase ridership.

## Support for investments to implement 6 Natural and Working Lands Measures:

- Improve wildfire resilience and management for forest fuel treatments.
- Install innovative, low emission biomass to energy or biofuel electricity generation.
- Increase tree canopy in urban and natural areas by supporting tree planting activities.
- Create a carbon sequestration and new carbon farming program.
- Develop and implement a new local GHG offset program.
- Reduce natural and working lands equipment emissions by replacing fossil-fueled equipment with electric versions when they are available.

## **Business Nexus**

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 created the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program (CPRG) that seeks to fund ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emission and other harmful pollution. Coordinated by the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro Air District), the Capital Region Climate Priorities Plan is the seven-county coordinated response to compete for CPRG funds. The Plan identifies opportunities for three categories of climate action in the region: natural and working lands, transportation, and the built environment.

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California's Capital Region does not meet the health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), and exposure to hazardous air pollutants coming primarily from fossil fuel combustion in industry, electricity generation, and transportation results in an elevated risk several times above the state average in some parts of the region. A federally approved plan for meeting the NAAQS is necessary for the region to remain eligible for federal transportation funds. The region is also behind meeting expected climate targets. Thus, additional discussions on land use, transportation, and energy supply throughout the region are underway, recognizing the cross connections of land use, transportation, and the built environment are necessary for progress and to advance towards achieving the region's clean air and sustainability goals.

The energy and transportation sectors are at a tipping point for dramatic disruption and transformation. Public transit needs have shifted in just a few short years as related to how people commute and access everyday services has shifted. The rise of zero emission electric vehicles (e.g., batteries and fuel cells), automation, connectivity, and alternative mobility options like transportation network companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft), micro-mobility shareables (e.g., cars, bikes, scooters), and innovative transit (e.g., micro-transit, on-demand shuttles) will have far-reaching implications for the way we build communities and move people and goods.

The energy sector is seeing increasing demand and generation capacity for renewable energy as electrification efforts ramp up. Investments in new distribution generation capacity, transmission, and energy storage are complimented by developments in carbon capture and sequestration. Thus, new and growing federal investments are necessary to continue progress. The Inflation Reduction Act provides funding for climate action at levels never seen in the past. These investments can be leveraged against state and local commitments for decarbonization and the just and equitable green energy transition in California's Capital Region.

## **Background**

According to the California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, anthropogenic GHG emissions are increasing the frequency and intensity of heat waves and extreme heat events, which negatively impact public health, decrease the longevity of transportation and electricity infrastructure, and impair crop yields. California is also faced with more frequent and intense wildfire events. Exposure to air pollution from wildfires is threatening public health, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Recognizing the need for expanded and accelerated climate action, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is administering the CPRG and aiming to create regional and statewide plans to reduce GHG emission and associated co-pollutants that compromise air quality.

As a national and global leader in environmental protection, California is aiming, through Assembly Bill 1279 (AB 1279), to reach statewide net-zero GHG emissions by 2045. AB 1279 also calls for state and local agency coordination of action to reach this target.

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The Sac Metro Air District, in coordination with 29 local jurisdictions organized into a CPRG Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is leading the development of the most competitive coordinated regional climate action plan for CPRG that would allow maximizing GHG emission reductions and benefits, first and foremost, for those most vulnerable and disproportionately impacted by air pollution and our changing climate.

Transportation emissions already cause significant air quality and climate challenges across the region that are exacerbated by certain geographical and weather conditions. Coupled with smoke from forest fires (see the Wildfire & Forest Health Team Policy Paper), these characteristics expose residents to a diverse range of risks over dense urban areas, valley farmland and agricultural fields, rolling foothills, and the high Sierra Nevada mountains. CPRG, as envisioned in the regional application, would encourage new climate strategies for each land use type. Through this and other climate action efforts, the region's public, private, and not-for-profit partners have already identified a set of guiding priorities including improved equitable mobility and reduction of vehicle miles traveled, grid resiliency, infill development, wildfire mitigation, agricultural biomass energy, green hydrogen, and energy efficiency. CPRG is a unique opportunity for accelerating work to decarbonize transportation, industry, the electricity sector, and natural and working lands all while addressing environmental injustice.

To effectively engage residents in the planning process, the CPRG Steering Committee formed an Outreach Advisory Committee from interested CBOs, nonprofits, and other community groups, although much more work needs to be done to ensure that it is truly inclusive of all communities in the region. Key themes from the outreach effort are the importance of equitable implementation of CPRG-funded efforts and continued engagement.

The geography and political landscape of the seven counties covered by this plan led to the selection of a distinct set of GHG reduction measures in three main categories – the Built Environment, Transportation, and Natural and Working Lands. The Capital Region Climate Priorities Plan encourages infill development, building and vehicle decarbonization, energy resiliency, carbon sequestration, forest and ecosystem health, and water conservation. Many of these priorities are captured for in detail by other teams (e.g., see the Wildfire & Forest Health and Water Resources 2024 Policy Papers). To meet our emission reduction goals, California's Capital Region will continue to advance electric power sector improvements, renewable energy deployments, and long-duration battery storage where feasible and effective.