

CT TCI Equity Letter Ready for Sign On Language is Final - No More Edits

August 30, 2021

Dear Members of the Connecticut General Assembly,

As a group of **environmental justice, transit equity, racial justice, faith, labor, and social justice voices**, we urge you to strengthen legislative language authorizing Connecticut to implement the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program (TCI-P) in order to achieve additional progress on equity and environmental justice. Our groups support stronger equity provisions to ensure this policy prioritizes communities that are exposed to the worst air quality and/or lack access to quality transit options. A failure to include strong equity provisions in the TCI-P bill risks deepening disparities regarding access to clean air, affordable transit, and high quality jobs. Now is the time for Connecticut to lead the region in its commitment to building a just and equitable transportation system.

During this past legislative session, Connecticut made progress in shaping a more equitable TCI-P bill. We strongly support legislators' commitment in S.B. 884 to establish an Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Board and ensure that a minimum of 50% of TCI-P proceeds go to transportation projects in overburdened and underserved communities. Adding the following key equity-focused provisions would improve the bill by directing that an equitable portion of TCI-P's benefits actually reach the communities in greatest need.

I. Empower the Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Board

Communities most impacted by transportation pollution, inadequate transit, and lack of access to clean transportation options should actively inform decisions regarding which projects TCI-P will fund in their neighborhoods. To ensure that members of the Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Board are accountable to and representative of overburdened and underserved communities, it is imperative that the appointment process occurs from the ground up. A **nominating committee of trusted community-based organizations** closest to these communities should be formed to nominate residents to serve on the Board.

The Board must have real decision-making power, including the ability to **influence how TCI-P proceeds are invested** and promote equitable outcomes in the program. A weak Board would disempower overburdened and underserved communities and prevent TCI-P from delivering cleaner air in air pollution hotspots and more equitable transportation systems. At a minimum, the Board should have the power to:

- Define "overburdened and underserved" communities,
- Recommend criteria to evaluate and prioritize TCI-P funded projects,
- Determine criteria that must be reported and met to verify that a project is providing meaningful, direct benefits and equitable impacts, and
- Recommend air quality monitor placement.

II. Establish Accountability Mechanisms to Improve Air Quality

Clear assessment and accountability mechanisms are critical to determine whether TCI-P is successful in reducing pollution, especially in communities that are most burdened by poor air quality. The TCI-P bill should require **expanded air quality monitoring in areas with the greatest pollution** burden and establish air pollution reduction targets. DEEP should publicly share the monitoring data and increase the percentage of dedicated funds toward reducing pollution in “overburdened” communities if air quality does not improve. Without this critical component, there will be no way of knowing whether transportation investments from the program lead to cleaner air in overburdened communities. In addition, the Board should **report annually to the legislature** and state agencies on the progress of TCI-P in achieving its equity goals and processes.

III. **Incorporate Fair Labor Standards**

TCI-P is expected to raise about \$89 million per year in Connecticut. The state must ensure these investments bring good paying jobs and workforce training opportunities. TCI-P funded projects should be tied to **prevailing wage requirements** to support a strong economic recovery for underemployed workers and their families. In addition, projects should partner with **workforce training programs**. TCI-P funded projects must prioritize expanded access to workforce opportunities and high quality jobs for people who are underrepresented in the workforce or who face employment barriers (such as women, people of color, people formerly incarcerated, people without formal education, veterans, and people living with disabilities).

By incorporating these key provisions into the TCI-P bill, Connecticut can take meaningful strides toward reducing pollution, supporting workers, and uplifting community decision-making power. Only by leading with equity can the TCI-P bill reach its full potential of building a better transportation system and supporting healthy communities.

Aziz Dehkan
Executive Director
Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

Thomas Regan-Lefebvre
Coordinator, Transport Hartford Academy
Center for Latino Progress

Nicole Wong
Campaign Manager
Dream Corps Green For All

Rev. D Stanley Lord
President
Greater Bridgeport Branch NAACP

Robert M. Goodrich
Executive Director
RACCE

Tenaya Taylor
Executive Director

Nonprofit Accountability Group

Barbara Lopez
Director
Make the Road Connecticut

Shannon Laun
Staff Attorney
Conservation Law Foundation

Anne Hulick
Connecticut Director
Clean Water Action

Maisa L. Tisdale
President/CEO
The Mary and Eliza Freeman Center
for History and Community

Lori Brown
Executive Director
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Brenda Watson
Executive Director
Operation Fuel

John Carlson
Manager, State Policy
Ceres

Amy McLean
Senior Policy Advocate and Connecticut Director
Acadia Center

Leticia Colon de Mejias
President
Green Eco Warriors

Mustafa S. Salahuddin
President - Business Agent
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1336

Daniel W. McInerney
Business Manager
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Local Union 488

Adrienne Esposito

Executive Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Susan Iseman
Climate & Transportation Specialist
League of Women Voters of Connecticut

Drew Stilson
Senior Analyst, U.S. Climate Policy
Environmental Defense Fund

Paulina Muratore
Transportation Campaign Manager
Union of Concerned Scientists

Joseph P. Toner
Executive Director
Connecticut State Building Trades Council

Bill Finch
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
National Electrical Contractors Association

Sean Daly
Business Manager
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 90

Bruce Donald
Southern New England Manager
East Coast Greenway Alliance

Kai Addae
Coordinator
The Safe Streets Coalition of New Haven

Mark Mitchell, MD MPH
Associate Professor, Climate Change, Energy and Environmental Health Equity
George Mason University
President
Mitchell Environmental Health Associates