



CLIMATE CHANGE + TRANSIT

In the wake of President Trump's pledge to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, numerous US mayors have signed the "We Are Still In" declaration, affirming the nation's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with or without the federal government's support.

Transportation currently accounts for 27% of carbon emissions in the US—surpassing the electricity sector for the first time since 1978. Shifting people away from private vehicles and into more efficient modes should be an obvious policy priority for urban leaders concerned about climate change. And yet, although mayors from New York City to Los Angeles to Chicago have committed to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, vehicle miles travelled is trending upward in each.

Many climate advocates focus on electrification, which - depending on the power source - can be an important strategy. But the urgency of reducing carbon emissions demands broader action, including shifting behavior from driving to sustainable modes like public transportation. TransitCenter has identified three key arenas where city leadership could make a sizable dent in transportation emissions: Adopting transit - supportive development policies, charging drivers their fair share, and reducing car trips via better street design.

These policy changes are politically difficult to implement, and it's easier for city leaders to promise more "shared mobility" or electrification. The far more important behavioral and land-use changes prove popular once implementation begins and benefits become apparent. The mark of real leadership is a willingness to confront these challenges.

As a mayor, how easy are you making it to live in your city without a car?

1. Avoid new car trips via better development policies.

Elected leaders and public sector planners can minimize driving by putting as many people near transit as possible, ensuring that new development reduces emissions rather than reinforces the unsustainable status quo.

- The City of Denver has a strategic plan for transit-oriented development (TOD), and a dedicated affordable housing construction and preservation fund. The Board of the Seattle region's Sound Transit recently approved three major affordable TOD projects on agency property and is developing an equitable regional TOD strategy to be released by May 2018.
- California has changed statewide real estate development review policies to ensure environmental impacts are estimated by whether a project creates more car traffic rather than "level-of-service", a superficial measure of traffic congestion.
- Cities including Cambridge, MA; Arlington, VA; and San Francisco have added incentives for developers to reduce parking and add driving-reducing "transportation demand management" (TDM) policies via zoning codes.



2. Charge drivers their fair share & rationally allocate resources.

Low-cost driving is the largest barrier to growing transit ridership, biking & walking.

- The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) implemented dynamic parking prices through its SFpark pilot project, and recently voted to expand it citywide. SFMTA's parking revenue is used to support the agency's transit operations.
- Stockholm and London have implemented congestion pricing in their city centers and funneled the revenues towards public transit improvements.
- São Paulo charges for-hire vehicles by the mile, with higher rates for single-occupancy trips and during high-traffic travel times and lower rates in underserved areas, for electric vehicles, and for wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

3. Reduce current car trips through street design.

We devote the most space in cities to our least space and environmentally - efficient transportation. Better street design can encourage transit use by speeding up trips and encourage walking and cycling.

- Seattle DOT and local transit agencies have partnered to prioritize buses on city streets. As a result, transit ridership has exploded and Seattle is now accommodating all new population growth on transit.
- NYCDOT has developed a regular pipeline of projects that emphasizes bus riders, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Transit agencies in Los Angeles, Nashville, and Denver have all developed walking to transit programs, directing revenue from recent bond measures into improving walking conditions near train stations and bus stops.

