



Testimony
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The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization
Before the House Transportation and Energy Committee
April 7, 2009
Senate Bill 09-094
Concerning the Creation of a Transit and Rail Division within the Department of
Transportation

On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Climate Organization (RMCO), I am testifying in support of provisions of Senate Bill 09-094, as it would help to implement the November 2007 recommendations of the blue-ribbon Climate Action Panel (CAP) that RMCO convened to recommend ways to reduce our state's contributions and vulnerabilities to climate change. Governor Ritter has adopted as state policy the emission-reduction goals recommended by the Climate Action Panel. RMCO now supports actions to reach those goals, including both the action items in Governor Ritter's Colorado Climate Action Plan and the other actions recommended by the CAP.

First, though, some background on RMCO and our Climate Action Panel. RMCO is a mainstream coalition with 42 partner organizations, including 15 local governments, Colorado's largest water provider, 13 businesses, and 13 nonprofit organizations. We work to keep the West a special place by reducing climate disruption and its effects here.

RMCO convened the Climate Action Panel to recommend actions to reduce Colorado's contribution and vulnerability to climate change. Patterned after projects to develop climate action agendas in other states, including many in the West, the Climate Action Panel was the first in the nation to be convened by a non-profit organization. We designated as Project Directors Mayors John Hickenlooper of Denver, Doug Hutchinson of Fort Collins, and Steve Burkholder of Lakewood; Summit County Commissioner Tom Long; Matt Baker of Environment Colorado; former Senator Gary Hart, now at the University of Colorado-Denver; Gail Klapper of the Colorado Forum; Pat Vincent of Xcel Energy; and Al Yates, the former president of Colorado State University. The Project Directors then appointed 34 leaders from the state's public, private, and non-profit sectors to serve on the Climate Action Panel. Additional experts and representatives of various sectors in the state assisted the panel by participating in six Policy Work Groups that developed draft recommendations for the consideration of the full panel. Altogether, considering members and alternates of the panel and the Policy Work Groups, 116 Coloradans worked for a year to develop the panel's recommendations.

The CAP recommended 70 actions to be taken in Colorado, consisting of 55 recommendations to reduce heat-trapping greenhouse gases -- two of which are relevant to SB 09-039-- and 15 recommendations to prepare the state for the changes that may be coming. The year-long process built a strong consensus, with 61 of the 70 recommendations agreed to unanimously, with seven others agreed to by super-majority votes (with five or fewer dissents). The Panel's full report is available at www.coloradoclimate.org.

The centerpieces of the CAP recommendations and the official Colorado Climate Action Plan that Governor Ritter announced right after the panel's report are identical. As recommended by our panel, Governor Ritter adopted as state policy the goals of reducing Colorado's emissions of greenhouse gases 20% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, compared to 2005 levels. Achieving the 2020 goal will require a 37% reduction in the emissions that are forecast to otherwise occur that year under laws and practices in effect in September 2007.

To continue the consensus-building success of the CAP, RMCO is now in the second stage of the Colorado Climate Project, in which we are continuing to work with diverse organizations and interests to flesh out details for implementation of the CAP recommendations, to build broad public support for those recommendations and for the Governor's Climate Action Plan, and to get them adopted.

In order to meet the statewide emission reduction targets, adoption of policies to reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases in the transportation sector must play a key role. An inventory and forecast of greenhouse gas emissions that was performed for the state government, and that informed the CAP proceedings, showed that in 2005, fully 24% of total emissions came from the transportation sector. By 2020, the transportation sector's share is projected to remain approximately at that level under business-as-usual practices.

Recognizing the importance of reducing transportation sector emissions, the CAP adopted eleven recommendations that together would reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions by about 7.8 million metric tons in carbon-dioxide equivalent by 2020-- about 14% of the reductions needed to meet the overall 2020 goal of a 20% reduction compared to 2005 levels. Many of those measures were focused on reductions of vehicle miles traveled, such as smart growth policies, investments in mass transit, and incentives for people to drive less. Others included emission standards for light-duty cars and trucks, low-carbon fuels standards, reductions in heavy-duty vehicle idling, and public education on vehicle maintenance and driving practices.

We are testifying in support of SB 09-094 because the establishment of a transit and rail division within the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) is linked to the CAP recommendations numbered TLU-3 and TLU-7 to improve and expand transit service statewide. The goal of those recommendations is to reduce light-duty urban vehicle miles traveled by 6% by 2020 compared to baseline projections. This is equal to a 22% rather than a 28% growth in light-duty urban vehicle miles traveled between 2007 and 2020 calculated by CDOT and regional councils of government. If achieved, that goal would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually by 2020. This recommendation was adopted unanimously by the CAP.

Passage of SB 09-094 could help achieve two of the provisions of the CAP recommendation: the creation of a statewide funding source for public transit systems and support for improvements in intercity bus service. As provided in SB 09-108, the \$5 million set aside for annual mass transit funding would be administered by the transit and rail division created by SB 09-094 by way of grants to local governments. Section 4 of SB 09-094 establishes as qualifying uses of those funds the construction, maintenance, and operation of interregional bus or passenger rail services.

We ask for your support of SB 09-094 and thank you for the opportunity to offer our testimony.