

Alert

dvrpc

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Alert is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.



Air Quality and Transportation

Equity Should Be Considered When Funding the Expansion of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The Biden administration has pledged to build half a million new electric vehicle (EV) charging stations nationwide within the next decade along with electrifying the federal vehicle fleet. Civil rights advocates have expressed concern that this investment will bypass communities of color and that the cost of EVs will be beyond the reach of low income citizens.

"Equity needs to be baked into transportation electrification decision-making right from the get-go," said Shruti Vaidyanathan, transportation program director at the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. That means installing EV infrastructure that is affordable, accessible, and integrated into the entire transportation network in order to avoid excluding low-income rural and urban communities.

Air quality benefits are used as one reason to promote EV adoption, but if that adoption does not consider how EVs can be made accessible to low income communities, the air quality benefits may accrue in wealthier communities that can afford EVs while the emissions from power generation are passed to environmental justice (EJ) communities that host the sources of electric generation.

Advocates warn that providing tax breaks and subsidized investment in communities that can already afford EVs will widen historic wealth gaps. According to the National Association of Realtors, homes in zip codes that host EV charging infrastructure sell for more than the national average.

According to Natalie Mebane, associate director for the climate advocacy group 350.org: "The very essence of our infrastructure for electric vehicles is designed for people who can afford to have an attached garage to the house they own, which already has many implications for socioeconomic status and race".

Investing in the electrification of the mass transit system is one policy recommendation that has been proposed to better distribute the benefits of investment in EV infrastructure. By investing in electrifying buses, the emissions benefits from reduced diesel emissions can be gained in the EJ communities that are most reliant on that form of transportation. Investing in research and advancing electric bus charging and technology will also help bring down the cost and increase the reliability of these vehicle for transit agencies.



Save the Date

Now Accepting Applications

The Mid-Atlantic Electric School Bus Experience Program

Accepting applications for school districts to participate in 6-8 week electric bus pilot program

For more information, please visit:

www.drivegreen.nj.gov/

Wednesday
April 14, 2021

Goods Movement Task Force

For more information, please visit:

www.dvrpc.org/Committees/DVGMTF/

Currently both SEPTA and NJ Transit are investing in electric buses and the necessary infrastructure to power those buses. SEPTA has acquired a fleet of 25 all electric buses and NJ Transit is acquiring eight all electric buses that will operate in Camden, New Jersey as part of a larger statewide zero emissions bus plan. The bus purchases are part of a larger program to upgrade depots and electric infrastructure to support the conversion of the transit agencies' bus fleets.

EVs, particularly in areas that use renewable sources to generate electricity, are a critical component of improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gases from transportation sources. Completing investment in the electrification of the public transportation system and expanding EV infrastructure more widely across the nation poses a policy challenge for governments looking to promote the expansion of EV usage and improving air quality while avoiding further widening the wealth gap between urban and rural areas and the suburban landscape where EV usage has already gained a foothold.

For more information on strategies to consider equity in EV infrastructure investments, the Citizen's Utility Board of Illinois has published a brief policy document titled *EV For All: Electrifying Transportation in Low-Income Communities*. This document explores the various considerations of equitable investment in EV infrastructure and is available for download at: <https://aboutblaw.com/VM2>.



Air Quality News

Governor Phil Murphy Announces \$100 Million Clean Transportation Program

On February 16, 2021, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy announced an investment of more than \$100 million in clean, equitable transportation projects that will improve air quality and reduce the effects of climate change while supporting New Jersey's goal of attaining 100 percent clean energy by 2050. The program leverages funds from the State's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the Volkswagen Mitigation Trust Fund to fund electrification programs, equitable mobility projects, and electric charging infrastructure in New Jersey's environmental justice (EJ) communities.

The \$100 million investment of proceeds from the State's participation in the RGGI and its share of the settlement with Volkswagen for tampering with vehicle emissions systems, will fund the following projects:

- \$9 million in grants for local government electrification projects that will help to improve air quality in EJ communities through the deployment of electric garbage and delivery trucks.
- \$13 million in grants for low- and moderate-income communities to reduce emissions that affect our children's air quality through the deployment of electric school buses and shuttle buses.
- \$5 million in grants for equitable mobility projects that will bring electric vehicle ride hailing and charging stations to four more New Jersey towns and cities.
- \$5 million in grants for deployment of fast charging infrastructure at 27 locations statewide.
- \$36 million to reduce diesel and black carbon emissions in environmental justice communities by electrifying port, cargo handling, and other medium- and heavy-duty equipment in port and industrial areas.
- \$15 million towards New Jersey Transit bus electrification.
- \$15 million in flex funding to further deploy additional funding to the listed initiatives.

To learn more about New Jersey's plan to implement clean and equitable transportation projects, please visit: <https://www.drivegreen.nj.gov/>.



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