

# We Need Transit to Stop the Climate Crisis

Transportation is the leading source of climate pollution in Minnesota.



**Without an immediate halt to fossil fuel emissions and early retirement of internal combustion vehicles and other polluting infrastructure, our planet—our home—will warm 1.5°C or to even more dangerous heating levels. Minnesota cannot sufficiently reduce climate pollution without significantly reducing how much Minnesotans drive. That requires transit investments.**

- > **We need to reduce driving to achieve climate targets.** National experts estimate the US needs a 30% reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2030—even assuming an aggressive electric vehicle (EV) adoption rate—to follow the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) guidance for averting the worst climate disaster.<sup>1</sup> Even taking EVs into account, Minnesota must cut driving by roughly 20% statewide to hit climate targets<sup>2</sup>—a reduction consistent with other states’ research<sup>3</sup>—while Minneapolis is required to achieve a 38% VMT reduction and Saint Paul 50%.<sup>4</sup>
- > **To reduce driving, Minnesota must proactively and dramatically increase transit use.** The IPCC confirms we need to invest in transit.<sup>5</sup> Transit—with supportive shifts to walking and biking—is the only transportation mode with the capacity to shift enough people away from car travel to meet climate imperatives. To attract significant new ridership, transit needs to be fast, reliable, frequent, navigable, and must provide comprehensive access to daily needs and wants.<sup>6</sup> This kind of transit service—possible across Minnesota—can happen with serious commitments from the State.
- > **Climate justice requires transit investments.** Current transit-dependent Minnesotans—who are disproportionately people of color, lower income, and essential workers—can only access 0.5-10% of the opportunities of car drivers in the Twin Cities metro, and less than that elsewhere in Minnesota.<sup>7</sup> Cars are crushingly expensive (\$9000+ per year), putting car ownership out of reach for many Minnesotans and making ownership an enormous burden for others.<sup>8</sup> Further, cars emit dangerous pollutants that damage the hearts, lungs, and minds of those living closest to major car infrastructure—again, predominantly people of color and lower income community members.<sup>9</sup>
- > **Transportation emissions are easier to reduce than other sectors—so Minnesota must reduce those emissions faster.** Agriculture and buildings generate significant climate pollution in Minnesota but reducing these emissions will be difficult and slow. Our state will need to reduce emissions faster in some sectors—like transportation and energy—to make up for slower reductions in others.

Minnesota is not meeting its current climate benchmarks and is falling far behind other states.<sup>10</sup> Our government is not meeting its obligation to protect Minnesotans. State leaders must fund transit now to secure a just and sustainable future for the people and places we love—and for the next generation.<sup>11</sup>



## Sources

- 1 See Rocky Mountain Institute, *Coronavirus and the Fragility of Auto-Centric Cities*, April 13, 2020, available at <https://rmi.org/coronavirus-and-the-fragility-of-auto-centric-cities/>. See, in aggregate, IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5° C: Summary for Policymakers*, 2018, available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>.
- 2 Minnesota Department of Transportation Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council, December 10, 2020, meeting, Slide 23, available here: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/sustainability/docs/advisory%20council/stac-slides-dec-2020.pdf>. See also Minnesota House Climate Action Plan, 2020, p. 3, available at <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/dfl/pdf/990649f7-d9db-4ffd-a5b5-496baddbb282.pdf>.
- 3 See e.g. University of California Institute of Transportation Studies, *State-Level Strategies for Reducing Vehicle Miles of Travel*, available at <https://www.uctis.org/research-project/strategies-for-reducing-vehicle-miles-traveled-vmt-synthesizing-the-evidence/> (“the state must achieve a 15 percent reduction in total travel by light-duty vehicles by 2050 compared to expected levels”); The Transportation and Climate Initiative, *Summary of Policy Options in State Climate Action Plans*, p. 6, available at [https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/TCI-SummaryofPolicyOptionsinClimateAction\(1\).PDF](https://www.georgetownclimate.org/files/report/TCI-SummaryofPolicyOptionsinClimateAction(1).PDF) (“DE[:] 20.4% reduction from 2010”); Revised Code of Washington 44.01.440 (1)(c), available at <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.01.440> (“the [state] shall ... [d]crease the annual per capita vehicle miles traveled by fifty percent by 2050”).
- 4 Minneapolis 2040, 2018, Goal 10: Climate Change, available here: <https://minneapolis2040.com/goals/climate-change-resilience/>. St. Paul Climate Action and Resilience Plan, 2019, page 56, available here: <https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Mayor%27s%20Office/Saint%20Paul%20Climate%20Action%20%26%20Resilience%20Plan.pdf>.
- 5 See e.g. IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5° C*, 2018, Chapter 4.3.3.3, available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-4/>.
- 6 See e.g. Transit Center, Research page, at <https://transitcenter.org/research/>.
- 7 See e.g. Metro Transit, Equity Stats, at <https://www.metrotransit.org/equity-stats> (“[M]ost jobs in the region aren’t accessible in a reasonable (or unreasonable) amount of time.”).
- 8 AAA, *Average Annual Cost of New Vehicle Ownership*, 2019 (“[The] average annual cost of new vehicle ownership climbed to \$9,282”), available at <https://www.aaa.com/autorepair/articles/average-annual-cost-of-new-vehicle-ownership>.
- 9 See e.g. Journal of Public Health, *Are Cars the New Tobacco?*, 2011, available at <https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/article/33/2/160/1591440>.
- 10 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Minnesota Department of Commerce, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2005-2018*, 2021, available at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/lraq-1sy21.pdf>.
- 11 See e.g. Constitution of the State of Minnesota (“We, the people of Minnesota, [to secure the state’s] blessings... to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.... [The State] Government is instituted for the security, benefit and protection of the people.”).



Move Minnesota leads the movement for an equitable and sustainable transportation system that puts people first. We are passionate about connecting communities, ending the climate crisis, expanding access to jobs and resources, and improving daily life for Minnesotans of all ages, races, incomes, and abilities. Learn more at [movemn.org](http://movemn.org).

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