



NARC
Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 300

Washington, DC 20009

202.986.1032 (tel) 202.986.1038 (fax)

www.NARC.org

Written Statement for the Record

Hearing on
“Transportation’s Role in Climate Change and Reducing Greenhouse
Gases”

U.S. Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, DC

From
The Honorable Stephen Cassano
Selectman, Manchester, CT
President, National Association of Regional Councils
and
Past President, New England Association of Regional Councils

Tuesday, July 14, 2009



Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Inhofe and distinguished members of the Committee. Please accept these comments on behalf of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), representing regional planning organizations and their local elected officials nationwide – large, small, urban and rural – including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and councils of governments (COGs). NARC's members and their local elected officials have a long and experienced history in transportation and environmental planning, and should be looked to as critical partners in discussing federal transportation, climate change or other related legislative matters.

The U.S. is faced with a myriad of transportation challenges – climate change, economic shifts, security, congestion, exurban growth and air quality attainment – that necessitate our localities work collaboratively on a regional level to make our communities safe, environmentally-friendly and economically competitive through a seamless, efficient and effective multimodal transportation network. This, however, cannot be done without a strong federal-state-local partnership that provides flexibility and funding to address our burgeoning economic and environmental issues through improved transportation planning and project implementation processes.

According to statistics, the transportation sector is responsible for 30 percent of greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions, and there are many efforts – federal, state, regional and local – to curb these emissions through new technologies, innovative best practices and increased modal choices. Innovation for continued success must be encouraged. This can be done by providing local governments, through their regional planning organizations, the proper resources, incentives and flexibility. To ensure the greatest environmentally and economically positive results, a federal program administered by MPOs to reduce GHGs should consider:

- strengthening the MPO-state relationship;
- implementing an incentive-based GHG reduction program, not regulatory, to avoid replicating the air quality conformity process;
- incorporating appropriate and attainable performance measurements to ensure accountability and transparency;
- maintaining local governmental authority over land use, zoning or housing decisions;
- allowing MPOs to create pilot projects and incentive programs for local governments that encourage local and regional innovation that speak to community needs and promote livability;
- investing in data sources, state-of-the-art modeling tools and staff training that will inform regional GHG reduction activities and solutions;
- providing for educational and training opportunity for local governments, employers, etc.;
- including the impacts of inter-regional commuter sheds that extend beyond any one MPO's jurisdiction;
- and,
- recognizing there is no “one size fits all” approach, and allowing for maximum flexibility to create and implement appropriate local and regional solutions.



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NARC and its members look forward to working with Congress to develop new opportunities and policies for transportation and the environment at the federal level that are best poised to address our current and future needs. We encourage Congress to direct appropriate levels of new revenue to MPOs, COGs and local governments to help control pollution by providing economic incentives for achieving emissions reductions through proactive and innovative transportation solutions.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact Fred Abousleman, NARC's executive director, at fred@NARC.org or 202.986.1032, x216, for additional information. Thank you for your dedication to public service and your willingness to include the nation's regional planning organizations and their local elected officials in this debate.

About NARC:

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) advocates for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address community planning and development. NARC's member organizations include Regional COGs, MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). NARC advances regional approaches through policy development and implementation that align federal investment and programs to increase funding and authority for local governments, regional planning organizations and the local elected officials serving America's communities – large and small, urban and rural. Please visit www.NARC.org for more information.