

Draft Scoping Plan Comments
NYSERDA
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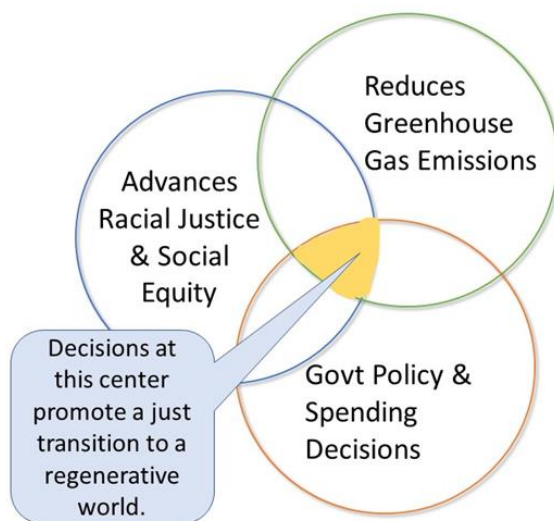
Via email: scopingplan@nyserda.ny.gov

July 1, 2022

Dear Climate Action Council and NYSERDA,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the New York State [Draft Climate Leadership Scoping Plan](#). As required by the CLCPA, climate justice and environmental justice must be the drivers of the outcomes of this scoping plan.

In fact, to achieve zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 in a way that is equitable and just, it is critical that the implementation of the CLCPA through the scoping plan be considered in every other policy and funding decision in New York. I urge all New York policy makers to work together and make decisions based on the following framework:



New York can be the national leader in demonstrating that we can get to net zero GHG emissions by 2050, not simply an 85% reduction, with reliance on negative technologies to pull GHG from the atmosphere. I urge NYS to implement a final plan that chooses strategies under Mitigation Scenario 4 whenever possible. Scenario 4 is the best scenario for the following reasons:

1. It prioritizes mitigation at the sources of GHG emissions, which will likely reduce the need for climate adaptation. Early and ongoing mitigation of GHG emissions rather than delaying mitigation and focusing on adapting to climate change will increase the likelihood of meeting GHG emissions targets, decrease the harms caused by climate change, and reduce the financial costs of this emergency to state and local governments, to businesses, and, most importantly, to

the people. Early and ongoing mitigation is both more cost-effective and creates better outcomes than delaying mitigation and focusing on adaptation.

2. It does not rely on negative technologies to mitigate GHG emissions after they are already in the atmosphere. Given human nature, I am very concerned that corporations and policy makers will see the use of negative technologies as a free pass to continue fossilized fuel extraction, current levels of GHG emissions, and generally living the way the world has lived for the past century.¹ My understanding of the science shows that this is a path to disaster, where only a small percentage of the human race (those with the most wealth) will be able to shield themselves from the impacts of climate change, while the rest of humanity suffers and dies. For me, negative technologies mean scientifically developed technologies to pull GHG from the atmosphere or geoengineering projects to cool the atmosphere, few of which have been developed or are at-scale to make a difference. These negative technologies do not mean finding ways to use what the earth already has to capture more GHG or reduce emissions, such as maintaining our forests and bogs, planting more trees, developing methods to raise livestock sustainable grazing methods that enhance natural grasslands. The impacts of these methods are known; they can be quickly brought to scale; and they need to be done in conjunction with changes in our way of living that reduce emissions, like moving to plant-based diets.

I am pleased to see that Chapter 12: Buildings of the scoping plan emphasizes supports for low-moderate income and other disadvantaged communities, especially “direct cash incentives and financial support mechanisms for energy efficiency and electrification for LMI households, affordable housing, public housing, and Disadvantaged Communities.” This is right at the center of the Ven diagram I shared above.

My concern is how families and communities will learn about these programs and access them in a timely manner when they are faced with a broken water heater or furnace, or a car at the end of its useful life. Folks need to know their options at least at the time of replacing a broken appliance, water heater, furnace, or car. If they replace it with an inefficient unit and/or one that uses fossil fuels or HFCs, then it’s too late. Preferably, New York residents will know their zero/low GHG options and the financial support options before an emergency, so they can be ready to purchase the most energy efficient and electrified option.

In addition, we need to educate New Yorkers about the urgency and importance of making this transition, and why it’s important to future generations. The education needs to counter the messaging of climate deniers and delayers with clear data and information about the specific costs and benefits of energy efficiency, electrification, and other ways to reduce GHG emissions.

I urge New York to put together an intensive community education program about the CLCPA, climate justice, environmental justice, and the implementation of the law. The State can use local climate groups, local governments, and local schools to educate how climate change will affect each NY community and how the implementation plan will mitigate climate change and help the community adapt to it. In order to reach the most people, the education needs to be in various forms of media, across diverse social media platforms, and in the different languages spoken by NY residents, including American Sign Language for the Deaf community. In addition, the education should be in digestible bites, not in hundreds of pages. For example, an infographic with audio descriptor or short video with

¹ See Naomi Klein. 2014. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. See also, NOVA. 2020. *Can We Cool the Planet?* <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/can-we-cool-the-planet/>

transcription and ASL interpretation about how people and communities might reduce vehicle miles traveled and the benefits to it.

I also urge NYS to be fully transparent with New Yorkers about the decisions made and not made to implement the CLCPA, including sharing the findings and information behind the decisions. As I read the first part of the draft plan (I did not get past the Buildings section), I noticed that when the costs and benefits of the plan were discussed, I wanted more specific information about the specific estimates behind the conclusions that the benefits outweigh the costs. However, I do appreciate the graphics of Figure 12 (p 81) showing the overall costs and benefits for each scenario. I suggest that similar graphics be done for each sector in each region of the state, and maybe for a typical family in each region. I also suggest that the state estimate the costs for each sector by 2050 (in 2020 dollars) of not implementing the plan to make a direct comparison to its implementation.

Re: how Disadvantaged Communities are being considered, I am very concerned about the 3rd consideration in the draft plan: “Areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as flooding, storm surges, and the urban heat island effects,” particularly with respect to flooding and storm surges (Ch 6, Achieving Climate Justice, pp. 33-34). It is critical that all of the criteria emphasize the “impacts of climate change *on historically marginalized people and communities, including BIPOC and low-income people and communities.*” Without this emphasis, this 3rd consideration is likely to shift priorities to upper income and privileged communities who are often the first to speak and be heard and then often receive a disproportionate share of resources. The Climate Act defines Disadvantaged Communities as “communities that bear burdens of negative public health effects, environmental pollution, impacts of climate change, **and** possess certain socioeconomic criteria, or comprise high-concentrations of low- and moderate- income households . . .” (p. 33, emphasis added). This “and” in the Climate Act is very important as it shows that to be considered a disadvantaged community the community must suffer negative effects of climate change **AND** be disadvantaged in other ways (socioeconomically, historically marginalized, subject to environmental racism or other forms of racism). This needs to be clear in the final definition.

I urge the State to work side-by-side with regional climate action groups and municipal governments to remove the silos and assure that entities at every level are pulling in the same direction to get the entire state to net zero by 2050 at the latest in a way that is equitable and just. The Genesee-Finger Lakes Climate Action Strategy is a well-thought-out plan that was developed collaboratively with the community.²

I am concerned that the State recently developed a 50-year Housing Strategic Plan that likely did not incorporate some of the principles included in this draft scoping plan to support low-moderate income and disadvantaged communities in reducing GHG emissions and moving to net zero. As housing is the largest GHG producing sector, I urge the State to update its Housing Strategic Plan as soon as possible so that all state housing dollars are spent in alignment with this plan.

Also, with respect to Buildings, it was not clear to me how the State will support increased energy efficiency and electrification of rental homes, particularly for low-moderate income families and Disadvantage Communities. In the city of Rochester, 60% of the homes are renter-occupied, and many

² <https://www.climategfl.org/climate-action-strategy>

of the families in these homes are rent-burdened. The final plan needs to make sure that these homes are also part of the plan and that the costs of transition are not passed onto the families living in them.

Overall, I am hopeful that NYS is taking action on this critical emergency. I urge the State to act as expeditiously as possible and find creative ways to fund the changes that are needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Van Kerkhove".

Barbara Van Kerkhove

[REDACTED]

Rochester NY 14620

[REDACTED]