



Vermont Energy & Climate Summit
“Meeting Vermont’s 2025 Energy & Climate Goals”
Pitch Submission Form

1. **Pitch Submitted By (Your Name or Organization):** Transportation for Vermonters Coalition; Kelly Stoddard Poor (AARP VT) Coalition Member

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4. **Pitch Title:** (one line): Invest in active transportation to create a complete and connected transportation system that ties in our land use policies to improve public health, quality of life, mobility and access while reducing emissions.

5. **Pitch Summary:** Today’s streets are designed to prioritize one mode of transportation – the motor vehicle. As a result, our streets, which were once avenues of commerce and places of connection, have become about moving cars rather than connecting people to places. Vermont has the opportunity to realize a multitude of benefits by enhancing our active transportation network and investing intentionally in the implementation of complete streets and compact development.
¹Complete Streets policies not only make it possible for residents to take shorter trips and utilize public transit, but to drive less, saving money and reducing harmful emissions pollution. In addition to investing in Complete Streets, Vermont has the opportunity to lead the way in collecting and analyzing their performance. While we know initial data suggests Complete Streets projects were related to broader economic gains like increased employment and higher property valuesⁱ, creating and using new performance measures for transportation projects and the transportation system is essential. This would will help agencies ensure they are on the right track — and celebrate when our investments successfully help Vermonters age in place, live affordable and healthy lives, and attract and retain young Vermonters. **To fully benefit all Vermonters, we believe the State needs to establish benchmarks and goals for active transportation to ensure accountability and greater adoption of Complete Streets law.**

6. **What energy sector(s) does this Pitch apply to? (Check all that apply):**
 - Energy Efficiency
 - Electricity
 - Transportation
 - Thermal Heating &/or Cooling
 - All (Total Energy)
 - None: Non-energy related carbon reduction proposal

¹ Complete Streets is a set of transportation policy and design approaches that allow Vermont to plan, design, operate, and maintain roadways to enable safe access for all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

7. **Which criteria category(ies) does it address? (Check all that apply):**

- X Economic Activity
- X Affordability
- X Vulnerable Vermonters
- X Other – Health, Isolation & Quality of Life

8. **Scale of impact on Vermont's energy and climate goals:**

Complete streets are a vital part of livable, attractive communities. Everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, race, or ethnicity, ought to have safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation. By making these investments the following benefits will be achieved:

Environmental:

- Greenhouse gas pollution reduction (the transportation sector accounts for 47% of greenhouse gas emissions in VT – the single largest contributor).
- Energy and transportation efficiency.

Public Health:

- Supports healthy active lifestyles and physical exercise.
- Access to public health services.
- Reduction of deadly particulate matter air pollution from combustion engines.
- Smart Growth America found that complete streets saved \$18.1 million in collision and injury costs in one year.

Economic Development:

- Reduces transportation costs.
- Improves access to markets and local businesses.
- Bolsters tourism opportunities as being a destination for active recreation – including road and mountain biking.
- Compact communities consistently increases property values by more than 15 percent for office, residential, and retail use.
- According to a study by Smart Growth America, “complete streets projects were related to broader economic gains like increased employment and higher property values.”

Social Equity:

- Access for disadvantaged groups and vulnerable Vermonters.
- Access to cultural and recreational opportunities for all.

9. **Benefits/costs of this proposal for Vermont and Vermonters:** Both land use and transportation planning are community processes that significantly affect how people and goods move from place to place, as well as how well a community functions for the people who live there. Transportation infrastructure and land use decisions not only shape how communities grow, but also influence other types of development, economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity. Planning for transit-, bicycle- and pedestrian- friendly communities can reduce demand for automobile transportation and improve environmental quality.

Health Benefits & Social Equity: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends Complete Streets due to the direct link between the built environment and physical activity.

- A quarter of kids and teens, and 60% of adults, in Vermont are overweight or obese. Unfortunately, many children do not have safe places to play and recreate outside.

- Unhealthy weight gain brings higher risk for pre-diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, and joint problems.
- Studies show that people in walkable neighborhoods generally get about 35 to 45 more minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week and are less likely to be overweight or obese than those in low-walkability neighborhoods.

Older adults are one of the most vulnerable population when it comes to pedestrian safety. By 2030, nearly one in four Vermonters will be 65 or older. More and more Vermonters want to age in place and contribute to the vitality of their surrounding communities, and about half of all non-drivers over the age of 65 would like to get out more often. What’s more, almost one in five Americans live with some type of disability.

Economic benefits:

- Walkability is marketability – homes located in walking distance to amenities and services associated with higher property values.
- Projects that include bicycle and pedestrian facilities create more jobs.
- **Transportation is the second largest expense for families: 18% of their household budget and for low income households they spend up to 55% of their budget.**
- According to research conducted by Harvard University in 2015 commuting time is the single biggest barrier to economic mobility.

10. Decision-makers necessary for this proposal to be adopted or move forward

Advance the practical impact of complete streets on the ground through the following:

1. Legislatively advance the changes to the State Highway Design Standards by updating them to reflect current national standards that advance multimodal networks that discourage exemptions from Complete Streets.
2. Through regulation establish performance measures, benchmarks and goals for active transportation projects. Current statute allows for broad exemption from implementing complete streets, *“outside the scope of a project because of its very nature,”* which provides an expansive opportunity to exempt projects from complete streets requirements without any limitation.

11. Strategy and key considerations: Vermont’s Complete Streets statute (passed in 2011) does not require VTrans to establish benchmarks or the collection, monitoring, and reporting of data on implementation. Furthermore, the policies do not indicate the extent to which meeting the complete streets requirements impact the availability of funding for projects (funding is not tied directly to the implementation of complete streets projects). There is no review arm or senior-level official designated within VTrans to approve an exception to the complete streets policy, and no tracking of Complete Streets implementation at the local level beyond having a project manager provide written documentation if a project does not incorporate the principles.

12. Timeline: Timeline for implementation and changes to VTrans’s procedures could be accomplished within the medium term, 2-3 years. Rollout of updated state highway design standards and requirements may take time given that even once the changes are passed, road projects don’t happen overnight. To achieve the full benefit of complete streets on the majority of Vermont’s roads will take time as projects are designed, funded, and built over several years, but with updated standards and performance measures transportation projects will be better suited to incorporate all modes of transportation generating multiple benefits.

¹ These findings are based on data collected directly by local transportation and economic development agencies as reported to Smart Growth America’s National Complete Streets Coalition