

MEMORANDUM

TO: Climate Action Steering Committee (CASC)
FROM: Allison Osterberg, TRPC
DATE: November 17, 2021
SUBJECT: Developing a Legislative Agenda

Requested Action

No action – item is for discussion only.

Background

One of the highest ranking actions included in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan focused on advocating for climate-mitigating state and federal policy through a shared legislative agenda:

- **G5.5 – legislative agenda:** Prioritize climate mitigation policy in the municipalities' legislative agenda each year. Instruct municipal lobbyists to track and report on climate bills, and advocate for those bills that will help reduce local emissions. Work with other jurisdictions across the state to add this to the priorities for the Association of Washington Cities and Washington State Association of Counties.

The [Implementation Strategy](#) for the TCMP identified 13 actions where the preferred approach was to advocate for changes to state law, rather than developing programs or policies at the regional or jurisdictional level or by supporting a local partner. These actions were lumped under the following broad strategies:

- Establish additional financial incentives for property owners to invest in energy efficiency upgrades, such as authority to provide local tax credits or exemptions. (B1.4, B1.5, B4.6)
- Establish additional authority to ensure standard building energy efficiency information is provided to prospective tenants and consumers during real estate transactions, at times of sale, lease or rent. (B1.1, B1.2, B1.6, B2.1)
- Build on changes in the state building and energy code to support an even faster shift toward greater efficiency and electric appliances in new construction. (B2.8, B4.11, B4.12, B6.2, B6.4, G5.2)

For the past session, the CASC received regular updates as part of their meetings tracking climate-related bills, and met with Representative Jessica Bateman to discuss recent climate legislation activity at the state. The CASC has affirmed a desire to support legislation that aligns with the TCMP, but has not settled on an approach to developing a legislative agenda.

Options for Discussion

For the November 22nd meeting, the CASC is set to discuss how they would like to approach a legislative agenda, and what legislative issues they see as priorities.

Process

There are several approaches the CASC could take to having a legislative agenda, including in combination:

- Identify and agree to a short list of specific legislative priorities that is formally approved and shared with legislators and the public.
 - Example: [Legislative Interests](#) document developed by the King County-Cities Climate Collaborative (K4C).
- Discuss legislative priorities as a committee, but pursue legislative advocacy individually through existing methods, including municipal lobbyists, and existing groups like AWC and WSAC.
 - Examples:
 - [Association of Washington Cities](#) – 2022 Priorities
 - [Thurston County Chamber Shared Legislative Priorities](#) – still showing 2021 priorities
 - [Washington Association of Counties](#) – still showing 2021 priorities
- Track individual bills, and, when feasible, testify in support of bills that align with the TCMP or weigh in on bills that create barriers to implementing the plan. This is similar to the approach used for the 2020/2021 session.

Topics

- **2021 Bills** - The 2022 legislative session will be short (60 days), and all bills from last year's session that were not enacted are still alive. Relevant climate bills from 2021 include:
 - Community solar programs ([HB 1046](#)) – expand access to solar energy and community solar programs. Olympia Community Solar is working in support of this bill, and is also proposing to revive a version of [HB 2248](#) from the 2019/2020 session that focuses on expanding access to solar for low-income households.
 - Healthy Homes and Clean Buildings Act ([HB 1084](#)) - Reducing statewide greenhouse gas emissions by achieving greater decarbonization of residential and commercial buildings.
 - Climate in GMA ([HB 1099](#)) - Improving the state's climate response through updates to the comprehensive planning framework. A budget proviso from last session has enabled the Department of Commerce to begin developing some of the guidance for elements of this bill.
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the design of public facilities ([HB 1280](#)). Sets requirements for all-electric and clean-energy systems in new and newly leased publicly owned buildings be considered using life-cycle cost analysis.
- **TCMP-related Areas** – Staff and CASC members have discussed potential areas where legislation would support local climate mitigation efforts (see Attachment for proposal from Mayor Pete Kmet with a more targeted list and specific funding requests):
 - Buildings & Energy
 - Increase funding for programs that provide financial incentives for property owners to invest in energy efficiency upgrades, especially targeted to low-income and rental homes.
 - Establish a statewide standard to ensure building energy efficiency information is provided to prospective tenants and consumers during real estate transactions, at times of sale, lease, or rent. Focus on guidance or tools for standard energy efficiency reporting for multi-story multifamily buildings and rental units.
 - Allow jurisdictions to adopt local standards that reach beyond state minimum code requirements for energy use in new building construction to support a faster shift toward greater efficiency and electrification.
 - Create tools to support a transition away from natural gas in residential and commercial heating and cooking, including enabling the use of utility incentives for fuel switching.
 - Transportation & Land Use

- Pass a transportation package that emphasizes equitable investment in transit, active forms of travel, adoption of electric and low-carbon vehicles, and more efficient commute modes.
- Fund local planning work to integrate climate change into the Growth Management Act and comprehensive planning.
- Fund and coordinate broadband infrastructure to support equitable access to teleworking.
- Encourage telework and flexible schedules for state employees.
- Water & Waste
 - Continue funding for water conservation programs and allow more flexibility in programs funding water and wastewater infrastructure improvements.
- Agriculture & Forests
 - Provide funding for pilot projects that achieve carbon sequestration through the preservation and restoration of native prairies and forests.

For a view of what climate advocates are interested in next session, [Climate Solutions](#) has identified priorities in transportation, buildings, clean economy, and organics management.

Attachments:

- *Draft Legislative Priorities Proposal, Pete Kmet*



2022 Legislative Priorities - DRAFT

Who We Are

Thurston County and the cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater are working together to address the causes of climate change. The four jurisdictions have adopted shared goals to reduce locally generated greenhouse gas emissions and a regional framework for achieving these goals, described in the *Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan*. It is clear we cannot achieve these goals without significant policy and financial assistance from the state. We need your support on the following elements of the regional plan.

Buildings & Energy

- Require utilities to make public the electric and natural gas use for all buildings. Direct the state energy office to use this data to create benchmarks for categories of buildings and climatic regions so prospective purchasers, tenants and investors can make informed decisions.
- Allow jurisdictions to adopt local standards that reach beyond state minimum code requirements for energy use in new building construction to support a faster shift toward greater efficiency and electrification.
- Provide funding to improve the energy efficiency of existing low income housing units. (\$2 million request)
- Pass statewide deadlines for phasing out use of natural gas in all new residential construction and new commercial/industrial non-process uses. Direct the UTC to develop rules to enable utilities to recover investments in stranded gas distribution assets. Fund a pilot program to convert from gas/oil to electric heat and appliances in 100 existing low income housing units (\$2 million request).

Agriculture & Forests

- Provide funding for prairie preservation called for in Habitat Conservation Plans to enable development to occur within urban growth areas while preserving existing prairie land outside of the urban core for endangered species and carbon sequestration. (\$10 million request)
- Provide funding to acquire community forest land to be managed for sustainable harvesting and carbon sequestration. (\$10 million request)

Summary of Funding Requests (for Thurston County - managed by TRPC)

- Energy efficiency - \$2 million
- Electric conversion - \$2 million
- Prairie acquisition - \$10 million
- Forest acquisition - \$10 million
- TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST: \$24M