

Our country's commitment to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions will require significant changes to our communities. The federal government can and should be a partner in this effort, through a variety of ways, including investing in transportation alternatives, providing incentives for affordable housing choices and better community design, and funding innovative pilot programs that add community value while reducing greenhouse gases. Congressman Blumenauer is introducing legislation to help communities address global warming through design and transportation improvements.

Why is legislation necessary?

Since 1980, the number of miles Americans drive has grown three times faster than the U.S. population, and almost twice as fast as vehicle registrations. In 1969 approximately 50 percent of children in the United States walked or bicycled to school, but in 2001 only 15 percent of students did. Today, our transportation choices contribute one-third of the greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Although new vehicle technology and low carbon fuel can substantially reduce emissions from automobiles and light trucks, these gains are likely to be offset by continuing growth in vehicle miles traveled.

How can community design and transportation alternatives help?

We already know that by encouraging people to live in more convenient locations and providing them with them a greater range of transportation choices, we can reduce auto trips and increase trips made by walking, biking, and public transit. In fact, these changes can provide dramatic effects: recent studies by Smart Growth America, the Urban Land Institute, and others have shown that shifting 60 percent of new population growth to compact development patterns with a range of transportation options could save 79 million metric tons of CO₂ annually by 2030. This bill would provide a combination of grant funding, tax credits, technical assistance and other incentives for better community design and a wider range of transportation solutions. With these federal tools, communities could reduce travel demand, shorten driving distance, and create vibrant neighborhoods where people can walk and bike safely and have access to convenient and reliable public transportation.

What would the legislation do?

- Establish a national goal to reduce the growth in vehicle miles traveled by passenger vehicles and light trucks 50% by 2030.

- Require transportation planners to assess and reduce the project's impact on greenhouse gas emissions.
- Provide grant funding, tax credits, and revolving loans for affordable housing near transit; work with realtors to provide consumers information about the impact of a home's location on household transportation costs.
- Provide tax incentives for developers to build transit-friendly facilities and for employers to provide bike and transit benefits, bike facilities, and telecommuting opportunities to their employees.
- Provide communities with funding and technical assistance to plan and implement land use and transportation projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Create pilot programs to support transit oriented developments and to encourage insurance providers to sell automobile insurance policies on a per-mile basis.
- Provide capital funding for schools and neighborhoods to create more opportunities for students to walk and bike to school.
- Make it easier for communities to build streetcars and other public transportation projects.
- Provide incentives for "complete streets" that accommodate all users, including bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, motorists, and pedestrians of all ages and those with disabilities.
- Require "green communities" standards, which include green building materials as well as transit-friendly location and pedestrian-friendly design, for all new Federal buildings and housing built with Federal assistance.

- Improve data collection and modeling to demonstrate the impact of land use and transportation planning on climate change.

Who benefits?

Besides significantly reducing greenhouse gases, this legislation would reduce Americans' out-of-pocket transportation and energy costs, provide safer streets for all users, improve accessibility, encourage a greater range of housing choices, improve personal health and fitness, decrease air pollution, and reduce traffic congestion and commute times.