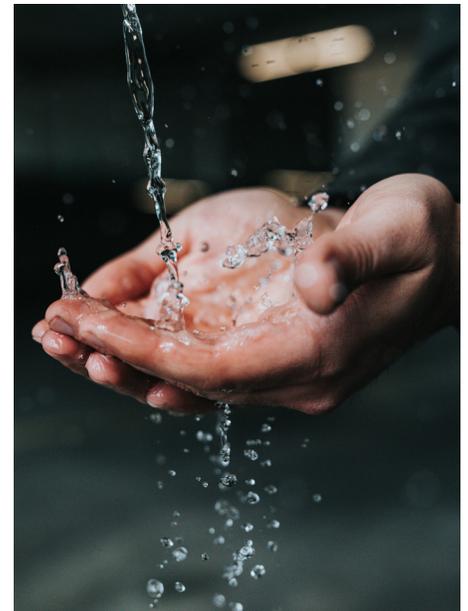


From Crisis to Opportunity:
**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**



AMERICAN
SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS
COUNCIL

2020 | WWW.ASBCCOUNCIL.ORG



OVERVIEW STATEMENT



The COVID-19 crisis has thus far killed nearly 100,000 people and put tens of millions of Americans out of work. The task of finding our way through this crisis has fallen primarily to state and local leaders. Even with the passage of three federal stimulus bills (with more promised), these leaders will remain in the driver's seat, and they now need bold ideas to move their states and communities forward. We offer our best ideas to help.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed what many of us already knew—that our current economic system does not work for most Americans. Challenges such as income inequality, market consolidation, climate change, and infrastructure collapse have posed increasing threats to our economy, our social stability, and our continued leadership in the world. Too many Americans, moreover, Republicans and Democrats alike, view our current system as rigged against them.

We believe that this moment provides state and local governments an opportunity not only to continue leading the way through this crisis but also in solving the structural problems the federal government has too long neglected. The following policy ideas provide a blueprint for what state and local leaders can do **immediately**. Most of our suggested policies effectively provide not only economic stimulus but lasting social, environmental, and public benefit. Many will attract support across party lines. Some cost little or nothing.

While our ranks are diverse, we are united in several basic propositions:

- **We believe** business can and should play a positive role in our society, and that business has responsibilities to multiple stakeholders, not just investors.
- **We believe** state and local governments have a role side-by-side with the marketplace: to structure markets so they work effectively, to manage the impact of externalities, and to ensure that public resources receive stewardship for the long term.
- **We believe** that not only is a sustainable economy compatible with shared prosperity, environmental protection and regeneration, and social justice – it is essential from both a moral and pragmatic standpoint that we restructure our economy to achieve this balance.
- **We believe** that a market-based economy is the most powerful engine of prosperity yet devised. At the same time, the market must be structured differently than it is today for the good of all Americans, and the billions of other people who share this planet.

As socially responsible businesses and thought leaders, we have long advocated for a triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit. None of these values are mutually exclusive. Together, through local investment, equity and accountability we can rebuild our post-COVID economy stronger, more sustainable, and enduringly just.

We offer the following ideas and public policies and we are ready to work with you to create an economic system that works for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Levine".

David Levine

President, *American Sustainable Business Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Shuman".

Michael Shuman

Senior Economist, *Council Fire*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT



We want to thank the following organizations for participating in this initiative:

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National Family Farm Coalition
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NJ Sustainable Business Council
North Carolina Business Council
NY Sustainable Business Council
Pesticide Action Network
Portland Buy Local
Project Equity
SAFER States
South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce
South Michigan Sustainable Business Forum
Stay Local
Stay Local New Orleans
Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts
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Urban Manufacturing Alliance
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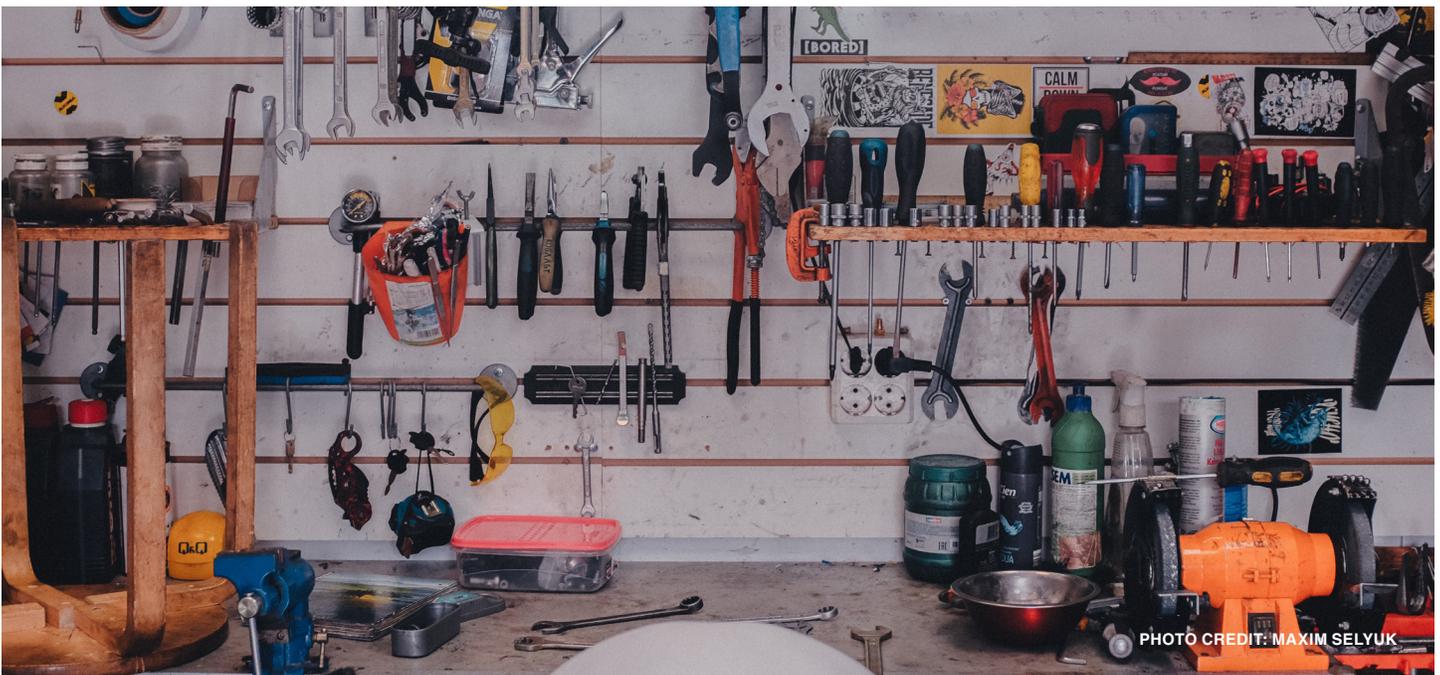


PHOTO CREDIT: MAXIM SELYUK

REFRAMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES



Overview

Current economic development policies focus primarily on expansion through job growth. Measurement of success is based solely on numbers of new jobs. This leads to local and national policies that encourage and support big business exclusively. However, small business provides 85% of all job growth and accounts for 95% of all business in the nation. Yet economic policies do not support small businesses in America. In fact, many of the policies created for big business create roadblocks for small businesses. The support of big business has led to the centralization of our economic power in a select few massive companies that compete unfairly with smaller businesses and isolate profits to the wealthy.

The current pandemic has exacerbated the fault lines in economic development policies and practices by fully supporting big business while thousands of small businesses struggle. This struggle is not just felt by the business owners but by the 100 million employees dependent on small businesses. It is imperative that we refocus economic development not on the growth of big business but on the retention of small businesses in every community in America. By directing resources and policies to small businesses building thriving local communities, we create a healthy sustainable economic ecosystem. This, in turn, builds a strong and resilient nation.

Policies & Actions

Recommendations:

- ☆ • **Create effective policies at the state and local level to encourage small business retention.**
 - Review local obstacles to small business retention and recommend policies that remove these obstacles and focus on small business retention and growth.
 - Integrate employee ownership into small business programs to ensure that small business owners, their advisors, and economic development officials understand the power employee ownership has to retain businesses, grow good jobs and build community wealth, and can effectively utilize this business model.
 - » Immediately fund state and regional Employee Ownership Centers to educate business owners about broad-based employee ownership as a business continuity option. Earmark this funding for established nonprofit technical assistance and succession planning providers in the field of employee ownership.
 - » Build on the PPP to create a forgivable loan program for businesses that transition to employee ownership.
 - » Ensure that small business lending program barriers are removed for Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) and worker cooperative lending.
- ☆ • **Expand Workshare Programs to all 50 states.**
 - Workshare programs let businesses temporarily reduce the hours of their employees, instead of laying them off during economic downturns. Technically referred to as short time compensation, the goal of worksharing programs is to reduce unemployment.
 - Under approved workshare programs, employees qualify for a percentage of unemployment benefits, equal to the percentage by which their hours have been reduced. For example, an employee whose hours are cut by 10 percent would qualify for 10 percent of the state’s established weekly unemployment benefit amount. While that does not fully replace the lost wages, the amount supplements a worker’s income until they are recalled to full-time work.
 - Just over half the states currently have workshare programs in place.



- Ⓛ • **Reframe economic development policy and practices to focus on local business needs and local economies.**
 - Document experiences and collect data to inform local policy-making.
 - More than a survey, individual interviews of local business owners reveal their true obstacles and challenges.
 - Conduct a survey of local assets that could be utilized to benefit a healthy local economic ecosystem.
 - » Leverage research to rethink economic development practices.
 - » Analyze case-studies, paying particular attention to these questions:
 - ◇ What are the community needs? What are the community assets? How can these be utilized for the benefit of all?
 - » Develop a new long-term strategy for sustaining local businesses.
 - ◇ Establish a new model of business retention.
 - ◇ Redefine economic development success measures.
 - ◇ Help communities understand and embrace the power employee ownership has to grow good jobs, preserve local businesses and build community wealth.
- Ⓛ • **Utilize areas explored by the coalition to engage local business communities.**
 - Build a clearer and shared understanding of economic dynamics impacting local businesses and local economies.
 - » Educate businesses and the public about the importance of a local economic ecosystem.
 - » Connect all elements of such an ecosystem so the reliance on each element is obvious to all. ▼

- Connect local business communities to select objectives of each task force providing for a nationwide action force of Independent Business Alliances (IBAs) and local businesses.
 - » Create a bullet-point roadmap of how each task force's objectives affect or are affected by local business.
 - » Educate local leaders about the role of local business in larger economic issues.
- Ⓛ • **Provide tools for local independent businesses to support the coalition's objectives.**
 - Foster productive relationships with both the private and public sectors nationally and in local communities.
 - Establish a conduit of information, tools, successful examples and even coaching for creating thriving local economies centered around local businesses.
 - Create a toolkit for IBA leaders to use in employing these policies, strategies and programs.
 - Utilize the trusted relationships IBAs have across the country to educate and activate communities.

Resources

- American Sustainable Business Council
- Community-Wealth.org
- Democracy at Work Institute
- ILSR - Why Local MattersK Studies from NCEO
- Mississippi State Univ - Community Economic Development - Approaches
- Mississippi State Univ - Community Economic Development - Frameworks, Strategies, Issues
- MissSU_CommEconDev_Key Concepts
- National Center for Employee Ownership
- Project Equity
- Roseville Community Development Corporation



Overview

Nearly \$4 trillion in taxes is spent by state and local governments each year. State securities laws also influence where \$56 trillion of housing finance is invested. Today, long-term household savings go almost entirely into global stocks, bonds, mutual funds, pension funds, and insurance funds, even though 60-80% of our economy is made up of local business (depending on how “local” is defined). State and local officials can generate **trillions** of dollars in new stimulus for their economies—**at low or no cost**—by shifting public and private capital into local banks and local investments, and by transforming their procurement systems.

Policies & Actions

Banking Proposals:

- ☆ • **Public banking** – Every state should move its surplus deposits (i.e., transfer payments from the federal government and tax collections, prior to expenditure) to local banks and credit unions as the Bank of North Dakota does. Moreover, these public banks should provide low or no-interest capital to major in-state reconstruction projects. (Cost Reducer)
- ☆ • **Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)** – CDFIs are federally designated community-based financial service providers that focus their resources on the most distressed and underserved communities in the nation. State agencies should enter partnerships with them, and encourage other banks to join, to provide additional capital to the communities they serve. States also could provide investment tax credits to institutions, businesses, and residents that invest in or donate to CDFIs. (Low Cost)
- Ⓛ • **Bank local** – Every jurisdiction should move its banking services, as Tucson and Phoenix have, from global banks to local banks and credit unions. This can enhance the credit capacity for local businesses. (No Cost)

Investment Proposals:

- ☆+ Ⓛ • **List local investment opportunities** – Every jurisdiction should help local investors find promising local investments by publishing on its website a list of local people, projects, and companies looking for capital. Those which have done proper securities filings (through crowdfunding portals, for example) would be viewable by everyone; those that have not would only be viewable by accredited investors. (More on this, below) (Low Cost)
- ☆+ Ⓛ • **Reform securities laws** – For many kinds of in-state investment, states set the rules for investing. They should be reformed, on an emergency basis, to speed up investment in fragile local businesses. Easy reforms (each costing zero) include: ▼

- **Crowdfunding rules** – Raise the limits on in-state crowdfunding offerings, so that companies can raise up to \$10 million per offer and unaccredited investors can invest up to \$10,000 per year. (No Cost)
- **Success fees** – Allow state crowdfunding portals to earn a “success fee,” even if they are not run by broker-dealers (which the SEC allows for federal portals). This would enable state portals to become viable businesses and expand. (No Cost)
- **Testing the waters** – The SEC is now considering allowing companies to discuss investment possibilities freely with unaccredited investors before any formal filings are required. States can and should enact these “testing the waters” reforms immediately. (No Cost)

-  • **Invest-local incentives** – Every jurisdiction should provide a tax credit to incentivize residents to invest in local businesses. A bill introduced in Michigan would provide a 50% credit. Such incentives also could be introduced locally, through property tax bills for example. (Low Cost)

Procurement Proposals:

-  • **Conduct studies** – To lay the foundation for procurement reform, states should assess: the percentage of public contracts going to local business; the lost tax dollars from nonlocal contracts; and other barriers facing bidding from local business. (Low Cost)
-  • **Ease contract rules** – States and localities should create contract portals that make it easy for local businesses to find contract opportunities, obtain necessary insurances, and submit needed paperwork. Mechanisms should be developed to pay local businesses faster. (Low Cost) ▼

- ☆ + (L) • **Enhance buy-local preferences** – In the short term, states and localities should increase their bidding preferences for local bidders. These should apply to contracts of all sizes, in all categories of procurement. (No Cost)
- ☆ + (L) • **Overhaul procurement law** – In the long term, states and localities should overhaul procurement to ensure that bidders respending contract dollars locally get proper credit for their tax contributions. Every bidder should be asked to declare the minimum percentage of a contract that it will spend on local subcontractors. The state should then estimate the likely tax dollars collected and adjust bids accordingly. (Cost Reducer)

Taxes:

- ☆ • **Adopt complete corporate profit reporting.**
 - Multinational corporations unfairly unload their tax burden to companies that only do business domestically by shifting profits overseas, which they are then not required to disclose under state law.
 - Requiring companies that do business in a state to report their worldwide profits and then apportioning tax liability on the percentage of sales earned in that state would raise more than \$14 billion for states across the country, and would reduce the unfair tax burden on domestic-only companies.
 - As online sales by large multinational corporations account for a greater share of in-state sales during this crisis, any corporate income tax that allows these companies to cloak their profits from in-state sales would significantly shift the burden to hometown businesses.

Resources

- [ASBC “The Power of Sustainable Purchasing” Business Case](#)
- [Books and Blogs of Michael Shuman](#)
- [Cutting Edge Capital](#)
- [National Coalition for Community Capital](#)
- [National Community Reinvestment Coalition](#)
- [Next Egg](#)
- [North Carolina Business Council](#)
- [Public Banking Institute](#)
- [Urban Manufacturing Alliance](#)





Overview

COVID-19 is unmasking widespread inequity and systems failure as it transforms social and economic life everywhere. In the U.S., tens of millions are now out of work (almost 15% unemployment rate) with a recession looming. Schools are struggling to adapt to online formats, while many households cannot afford adequate internet access. People are sheltering in unsafe settings, while others are struggling to pay rent or make their mortgage payment. Community and cultural events are postponed indefinitely, and social isolation and loss of hope is triggering increased mental health and substance misuse challenges. Our most vulnerable and marginalized are (predictably) being impacted worst.

COVID-19 is not only affecting our physical health and daily life, but also our mental health. Our country is in pain, from loneliness and depression resulting from isolation, stress and anxiety from the danger of contagion, grief and trauma from losses, to despair from lost livelihood and trying to make ends meet. Nearly half of Americans report that the coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health, and projections suggest the pandemic will lead to a steep rise in overdose deaths and suicides, and to hundreds of thousands more people with substance use disorders.

The COVID pandemic has magnified the inequities of our healthcare system. Workers who are providing the critical services on which everyone relies are facing dire health and safety hazards during this crisis. These threats are endangering millions of workers and the broader public. Unsafe workplaces during the pandemic have put customers, patients, workers' families, and everyone at risk. Already, tens of thousands of workers in hospitals, first response, nursing homes, meat and poultry plants, grocery stores, warehouses, and mass transit have fallen ill at work, and hundreds have died. And the hazards will only grow worse as state economies start to re-open. In addition, evidence is emerging showing that those living in more polluted areas fare worse when exposed to the virus.

Policies & Actions

Recommendations:

- ★ **Open up the state health insurance marketplaces** to cope with the growing segment of newly-unemployed adults. Most states have special enrollment periods for subsidized health care products; those requirements should be waived until a vaccine for COVID-19 is readily available.
- ★ **Ban the use of surprise billing and unexpected medical bills** related to seeking out-of-network care during the pandemic. Health care consumers may struggle to find health care services during and after the pandemic and should not be financially punished for seeking care out of their traditional network.
- ★ **Expand Medicaid services to 133% of the federal poverty level** to begin closing the coverage gap between those on Medicaid and those who receive health insurance through their employer. Fourteen states still have not expanded their Medicaid programs as allowed under the Affordable Care Act, leaving millions of Americans without health care.
- ★ **Require health insurance companies to provide coverage** for COVID-19 and pandemic-related treatment for in-network customers. Federal law already requires insurance companies to provide testing as part of their policies, but more states are now considering increasing that mandate to include treatment.
- ★ **Adopt regulations and policies that allow for the expanded use of telemedicine.** States need to ease restrictions and policies that prohibit or disincentivize telemedicine services, including doctor's appointments and prescription evaluations. State policies should be adjusted to allow for the ease of appointment, billing, and reimbursement for these services.
- ★ **Create prescription drug purchasing pools** that allow the public to tap into the purchasing power of the state employees union to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. States are among the largest purchasers of prescription drugs; that purchasing power should be leveraged across the health care economy to negotiate lower drug prices for everyone. ▼



- **Address racial disparities:** Collecting and publishing demographic data is crucial to both accurately determining the level of coronavirus impacts on underserved communities and communities of color, and directing resources to them accordingly.

In Michigan and Illinois for example, African Americans account for about a third of coronavirus cases and about 40 percent of deaths, even though African Americans only encompass 15% and 14%, respectively, of their state's total population.



- **Adopt policies that limit the use and release of harmful chemicals.** Millions of Americans across the country are drinking contaminated water, breathing polluted air and buying products containing chemicals linked to health hazards. Comprehensive programs that eliminate hazardous chemicals from products, clean up polluted water, and limit emissions, will not only benefit communities in the near term, but will have a ripple effect across public health for decades to come. States like Washington and California have led the way in regulating harmful chemicals, and more states should adopt similar programs.



- **Cities and states should implement health and safety protections** in workplaces, because there are none at the federal level.

- Access to PPE provided by employer, such as masks and gloves.
- Keep appropriate distancing measures –six feet– between workers at work stations, between workers and consumers, and during break times, punch-in times and in locker rooms.
- Hand sanitizers (that are at least 60% alcohol) provided throughout the work station.
- Time to wash hands with soap and water.
- Enhanced sanitation of workstations and commonly used areas.
- Communicate to workers when there is a case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- When there is a case of COVID-19 in the workplace, air out the area and deep clean.



- If a worker is exposed to COVID-19, they should quarantine for 14 days.
- For health care and first responders follow the CALOSHA standard to protect from aerosol transmissible disease: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html>

- ☆ • Ensure that workers' compensation covers COVID-19.
- ☆ • Stronger protection for workers that speak up about health and safety concerns regarding COVID-19 that includes a private right of action if they are victims of retaliation.
- ☆ • **Ensure existing environmental and public health policies are not eroded.**

Many states have adopted policies in recent years to encourage more sustainable purchasing and to limit the use of single-use plastics. These policies should not only stay in place but should be expanded. Single-use plastics are harmful at every stage of production, use, and disposal, and limiting their use benefits public health. Similarly, purchasing materials and products with a low chemical footprint not only increases demand for such products but protects public employees from unnecessary exposure to chemicals that can weaken the immune system, respiratory system, and endocrine system. Prevent a backslide on all the other advances made to “green” cleaning chemical products (e.g. glass, all-purpose, carpet and floor care, etc.) and other products used in cleaning, such as paper products (e.g. paper hand towels and toilet tissue) and plastic bags made from PCR.
- ☆ • **Funding for Local Behavioral Health Providers:** a recent survey of providers shows more than 60% of MH/SUD providers have already been forced to close one or more programs and 62% of providers cannot survive more than three months without emergency financial assistance. These alarming results stem from the \$38.5 billion in revenue that mental health and addiction treatment providers estimate they will lose this year. ▼

- Ⓛ • **Establish Paid Leave and Paid Sick Days** programs to ensure that all people have access to paid time off from work to recover from illness or to care for a loved one.

Resources

- Protecting Worker Safety & Health in the COVID Crisis: A State & Local Model Policy Response (National Employment Law Project)
- The High Road Workplace: A Route to a Sustainable Economy
- Panorama & ASBC: The Business Impacts of Paid Leave
- ASBC “Making the Business and Economic Case for Safer Chemistry”



STATE RELEVANCE



LOCAL RELEVANCE



Overview

As state and federal lawmakers look to rebuild the economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are presented with a unique opportunity to put climate resiliency and the rapid transition to a just, equitable, low-carbon economy at the center of our recovery efforts. This involves the diversion from fossil fuels to meaningful investments in clean and renewable energy, weatherization and other energy efficiency measures, and distributed energy systems that enable local communities to build a climate-resilient, equitable, and thriving local economy. Regardless of the types of strategies most appropriate for a particular state, the following policy recommendations will lead to meaningful carbon reductions and help to create a clean energy economy that works for all.

Policies & Actions

Recommendations:

- ☆ • **Establish emissions mandates to reach net zero by 2050**
 - **Develop a state strategy to meet a mandated net-zero emissions target by 2050** that takes into account state and regional policies, and includes intermittent goals which demonstrate meaningful reductions.
 - **Significantly increase state funding, support, procurement incentives, and permitting for large-scale renewable energy projects.**

Expand authority to procure renewable energy and bond for investments in renewable energy and storage, which should be used for large-scale solar and wind to help meet the interim emissions mandates, and to support community solar by selling to municipal Community Choice Aggregation programs.
- ☆ • **Make polluters pay** by promoting the creation or expansion of carbon pricing policy. Revenue generated should be prioritized for emissions reductions and speeding up the transition to a carbon-free economy. Any state or regional mechanism should meet the following criteria:
 - **Protect vulnerable households:** To the degree feasible, any system should use program revenues to provide additional protection and assistance to address the needs of rural and low-income communities who are overburdened by climate pollution, transportation costs, and a lack of clean energy, energy efficiency, and transportation options. These communities are often those most directly impacted by the adverse effects of climate change and as such, should enjoy the strongest benefits of any carbon pricing program.
 - **Sufficient fee/tax/price rate:** The rate per ton of GHG must eventually be high enough so that – in combination with the state’s/region’s other climate policies – GHG reduction mandates are met, and/or result in net zero emissions by 2050.
 - **Complementary and efficient:** Carbon pricing is most effective when used in combination with other policy and regulatory frameworks that lead to efficiencies and lower the costs to implement other GHG reduction initiatives. ▼

- **Economy-wide:** Carbon pricing is most effective when it covers the largest polluting sectors of the economy. Where feasible, each source should face a similar price.
- **Protect business competitiveness:** Tactics such as border adjustments, rebates, direct investments or similar opportunities should be provided to businesses that are energy-intensive and/or are in competition with firms from other states, regions or countries so that these companies are not disadvantaged in comparison to those based elsewhere.
- ☆ • **Work with utility providers to create a resilient 21st-century electricity grid** able to handle increased renewable interconnections, electric vehicles, and electrification. This would include directing utilities to invest in the infrastructure necessary to support widespread vehicle charging, and planning and permitting transmission able to move renewable energy throughout the state.
- ☆ • **Prioritize and expand workforce training opportunities in the energy efficiency, renewable energy and trades sectors,** such as programs that accelerate training skilled workers such as electricians, plumbers, energy efficiency contractors, and general contractors. Both training and job opportunities should be prioritized to low-income communities and communities of color and prioritize environmental justice.
- ☆ • **Increase investments in programs, local governments, and community-based organizations across the state** to support institutional, business, municipal, and community efforts to rapidly deploy renewable energy, energy efficiency, heat pumps, electric vehicle charging stations, and other needed infrastructure, and create incentives for communities to welcome and host grid-scale renewable energy projects.
- ☆ • **Reject permits for all new fossil fuel infrastructure,** including new gas-fired power plants and small gas pipelines for residential gas expansion. Ensure a swift move away from natural gas, including rule-making that prohibits utilities from investing ratepayer funds in gas projects. ▼

- ☆ • **Channel investments into coal-impacted communities** to ensure a just and economically viable transition away from extractive industries for millions of Americans living in close proximity to abandoned extractive infrastructure. One example is the RECLAIM Act, a bipartisan effort to create jobs while enhancing public health and safety by committing \$1 billion to help clean up dangerous, polluting abandoned coal mines on public and private lands.
- ☆ • **Promote policies that support sustainable supply chains.** “Buy Clean” purchasing policies promote spending taxpayer dollars on infrastructure supplies and materials that are manufactured in a cleaner, more efficient, climate-friendly manner—helping to reduce carbon emissions and reward companies that are conducting business in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
- Ⓛ • **Track and benchmark their energy use.** Continuous monitoring at the local level will help diminish energy use in the long term.
- Ⓛ • **Invest in energy efficiency.** Local governments can make decisions that yield greater energy efficiency.
- Ⓛ • **Pursue progressive land use policy that encourages mixed-use development.** Mixed-use development promotes sustainability. The best neighborhoods in New York City, for example, have long housed a healthy mix of restaurants, shops, offices and residences. Residents in New York routinely walk, bike, or use public transportation to reach their destinations within these connected neighborhoods, vastly reducing the need for automobile usage and ownership. The density and interconnectedness of mixed-use neighborhoods promotes the feasibility of public transportation in areas where it wasn’t practical before, thus reducing the environmental impact of an automobile-based commuter culture. ▼

- ① • **Invest in green and resilient infrastructure.** Green infrastructure projects generate tremendous financial benefits, allowing them to compete for a variety of diverse funding sources.
- ① • **Replace and retrofit local government equipment fleets to save energy long-term.** Replacement consists primarily in replacing older, inefficient equipment in buildings with newer, efficient models that meet or exceed current product standards and codes for energy efficiency. Examples include upgrades to lighting, HVAC, and refrigeration systems. Retrofits include targeted system upgrades and a comprehensive building approach that combines building audits with retrocommissioning and identified retrofits.

Resources

- ASBC “Municipal Primer on Climate Investing”
- Buy Clean
- ClimateXChange’s State Carbon Pricing Network
- Climate Action Business Association
- Climate Mayors
- Elected Officials to Protect New York
- Local Governments for Sustainability
- National League of Cities
- State Innovation on Climate Change





Overview

The people who produce our food are facing a crisis unlike any they have ever seen, encountering new threats sparked by COVID-19 while they endure a multi-year slump in prices for their goods, volatile trade disputes, frequent natural disasters, and climate disruption. Congress must act decisively to ensure that all farmers, ranchers, and fishers are included in any COVID-19 stimulus package, particularly small and mid-sized operations, limited resource producers, farms and boats operated by people of color, and tribal nations who have often fallen through the cracks of federal farm policy. The members of our food system are ready to continue growing, raising, catching, processing, and delivering the healthy food we need. They are all essential workers. Without them, none of us will eat. State and localities can support these policy initiatives.

Policies & Actions

Principles to guide food systems initiatives:

- Center the farmers, ranchers, fishers, and food workers of color who are most impacted by systemic inequities of our food system.
- Ensure a fair and safe livelihood for all farmers, ranchers, fishers and all farm, fish, and food workers.
- Bolster local & regional food systems poised to feed communities.
- Enact systemic reform to build resilience for all producers, workers, and consumers.
- Ensure every person living in the United States has a dignified means of accessing nutritious food.

Recommendations:

- ★ **Undertake a year-long income tax holiday for locally-owned food businesses.**
 - Give every locally-owned food business a one-year holiday on state and local income taxes. This is administratively simpler than doling out grants. It will give every local food business a shot at recovery post-COVID.
 - Notably, the fiscal impact of this recommendation is modest. According to the Tax Policy Center, corporate income taxes now make up only 2.4% of state revenues.
- ★ + (L) **Consider other forms of procurement to make it easier for local contractors that work with food insecurity to receive government funds.**
 - Local bidders should be fairly credited with their extra contributions to state jobs and taxes.
 - Insist that every contract bidder specifies the minimum percentage of the contract that it pledges to respend in-state. Those that promise higher in-state spending should be credited with the additional benefits they generate for the state.



- This administrative change will help stimulate the state’s economy.
- Examples of food policies are [here](#). Their COVID framing statement is [here](#). And, FCWA policy demands in response to COVID are [here](#).



- **Consider financial and non-financial incentives for local food-focused businesses.**

- The federal bailout programs naively fail to focus on local businesses, and our states should not make the same mistake.
- These incentives can include rebates, vouchers, and doubling-up on benefits.
- Additionally, the state should identify unused public resources that can be repurposed for local food purposes, as an incentive.



- **Empower local governments.**

- States should grant and/or restore local control over public health and food safety (with state regulations as floors rather than ceilings)
 - » [The American Public Health Association](#) and the [CDC](#) have resources in support of local control over public health measures.



- **Ensure that local food businesses, notably farmers and fishermen, are deemed essential under existing government regulation.**

(See MA example)



- **The government must include farmers’ markets in conversations on recovery.**

- Local food producers must remain part of the conversation moving forward. ▼



- Ⓛ • **Prioritize worker health and local safety.**
 - Devote resources to testing for COVID-19 and equip workers and vendors of local food businesses with PPE.
 - Cities should require and/or provide paid sick leave. Employees should be protected from retaliation by companies when they choose to remain home for public safety. For example, Chicago Mayor Lightfoot proposed a general non-retaliation policy to protect workers staying home with symptoms from firing.
 - » [Proposals by the Coalition of Imolakee workers](#) constitute sample protections on farmworkers.

Resources

- [Local Catch - National](#)
- [NAMA/NFFC Action](#)
- [Maps for Social Distancing in Outdoor Farmers' Markets](#)
- [MassGrown](#)
- [MA Division of Marine Fisheries](#)
- [Progov21 Library](#)
- [State Innovation Exchange](#)

[FNS Online SNAP Pilot to Include Farmers Markets with more info about retailer requirements:](#)

- Particularly the section which outlines the programming requirements...the key issue/hurdle for online retailer participation is being able to securely enter a pin number online.

At this time, FISERV/PaySecure is the only certified TPP for secure PIN-entry.”...that’s who Amazon/Walmart/etc. have contracted with. That’s why they can run the pilot. We have been suggesting that farmers markets could reach out to your current EBT processors to inquire whether they are working to integrate a secure PIN entry option on their existing platforms... and see what they say! From a statewide perspective we might also suggest initiating conversations with existing partners inside your state SNAP agency (for us, it’s Dept. of Economic Security, but different for every state as they are going to be the ones working with retailers, to express your interest!



PHOTO CREDIT: NATHAN DUMLAO

Overview

As the nation grapples with the worst public health and economic crisis we have seen in a century, state and local governments must take action to ensure that everyone has access to clean water. Clean water is essential for long term public health and economic vitality. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified and exacerbated the existing challenges facing our water systems. As businesses prepare to reopen with cleaner workplaces and more accessible handwashing facilities, our demand for water will dramatically increase. We must therefore put greater focus on fixing our failing water infrastructure and protecting the natural resources that feed our water system to ensure clean water for all.

Immediate action at this critical moment will help drive our economic recovery and build long-term resiliency.

Policies & Actions



Recommendations:

- **Improve access to clean water for drinking and handwashing.** Our businesses and therefore our economy will depend on a safe and healthy workforce as we reopen.
 - **Prohibit utilities from shutting water off** for local businesses and households that have fallen behind on their water bills and mandate safe reconnections for those previously disconnected prior to the crisis.
 - **Fund costs for utilities to restore and maintain water service for homeowners and renters.** This funding must be tied to provisions that prohibit water shut-offs and establish mandatory safe water reconnections, as well as lenient repayment plans, debt forgiveness, affordable rate structures, and at least 120 days for consumers to regain their financial footing before a shutoff moratorium could be lifted.
 - **Provide grants or low-interest loan funding to help support utility operations at a time when revenues are dropping dramatically.** This will prevent utilities from having to dramatically raise rates for customers in the long-run to make up for the revenue lost now.
- **Invest in water infrastructure to protect our communities now and stimulate long-term economic growth.** The American Society of Civil Engineers gives the United States wastewater infrastructure a D+ grade and our drinking water infrastructure a D, citing failing pipes—many over a century old—and emerging water contaminants. Nationally, investments in our water infrastructure could create over \$220 billion in total annual economic activity and sustain about 1.3 million new jobs over a 10 year period.
 - **Increased funding for drinking, waste, and stormwater infrastructure** loans, grants, and technical assistance with at least 20 percent of funding distributed to low-income communities as additional subsidization (grants) rather than loans and with set-asides for investing in green infrastructure projects. ▼

» Green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens and green roofs, is a more cost effective alternative to conventional “gray infrastructure” and uses natural processes to reduce and filtrate stormwater, helping with pollution and overloaded combined waste-stormwater systems.

- Ⓛ – **Municipalities can implement stormwater utilities** to establish funding sources for infrastructure projects.
- ★ • **Protect our most essential waterways.** Polluting industries often negatively impact downstream businesses, tourism, and overall economy far beyond any benefits of the polluting business itself. For example, craft breweries depend on clean water and contributed \$76.2 billion to the U.S. economy in 2017, with more than 500,000 jobs. Outdoor watersports—including fishing, kayaking, rafting, canoeing, and scuba diving—collectively generate roughly \$175 billion/year. Toxic algal outbreaks in lakes and in coastal areas, caused by runoff pollution from agricultural land and other sources, cause billions of dollars in damage to the seafood and tourism industries every year, and property values erode by as much as \$85,000 when near water bodies that experience algal outbreaks.
 - **Reducing and eliminating the toxic chemical inputs** into our wastewater treatment plants where the plants are ill-equipped to treat those chemicals.
 - **Regulating use of persistent toxic chemicals** in locations or applications that contribute to non-point source pollution especially where alternatives exist. These persistent toxics are also known as “forever chemicals” as they do not biodegrade and therefore accumulate in our waterways and then in our blood as our bodies cannot filter them (eg, chlorpyrifos, PFAS).
 - **Require toxics transparency** to empower municipalities to track impacts and enforce state and federal regulations. ▼



- **Funding for soil health practices, ecosystem restoration, green stormwater infrastructure, and water conservation technologies.**

These and other practices and technologies reduce the volume and pollution levels of stormwater runoff. This buys time for our toxic chemical mitigation efforts, helps mitigate extreme weather like floods and droughts, and reduces the size and frequency of toxic algal outbreaks.



- **Invest in protecting and strengthening communities.** We cannot have a healthy and vibrant economy without addressing the fact that millions of Americans are drinking polluted water.

- **Extend grants and technical assistance for completely replacing lead service lines** in businesses, households, daycare centers, and schools, thus protecting our children and communities from the damaging impacts of toxic lead pollution.

- **Protect communities from PFAS and other toxic "forever chemicals".**

PFAS is a diverse class of chemicals used in a wide range of products.

These “forever chemicals” frequently enter drinking water where many PFAS elicit a range of toxic effects in humans.

- » Ban the use of PFAS in firefighting foam, food packaging and textiles. Several states have already taken similar measures and doing so helps to stop future contamination of water, compost and food.
- » Conduct comprehensive testing of public drinking water systems and private wells to determine which communities are contaminated and prioritize resources.
- » Provide clean water to communities drinking contaminated water.
- » Ensure that spent filters and firefighting foam are not incinerated.

- **Pass sustainable procurement policies for public purchasing.**

State and local governments can pass public procurement policies that take into account environmental impact and can ensure that alternatives to toxic materials are used when possible.

Resources

- [Blue Green Alliance - Water Infrastructure](#)
- [Clean Water for All - Water Infrastructure](#)
- [Clean Water for a Healthy Economy](#)
- [Protectcleanwater.org](#)
- [Clean Water is Good for Business - Delaware Watershed Campaign, Mississippi River Basin Campaign](#)
- [The Power of Sustainable Purchasing Report](#)
- [Stormwater Utilities](#)





Overview

We have to **learn** how to live well in our places without undermining their ability to sustain us over time. The foundations of our knowledge, skills, and habits of mind are cultivated in our schools. Every sector - **food, buildings, business, government, higher education, urban and rural planning** - is making the shift toward sustainability and regeneration.

When schools and communities learn and work together for the future we want, everyone (businesses, local government, schools, community members, etc.) is encouraged to keep thinking, innovating, collaborating, talking candidly, improving their capabilities, self-correcting, and making personal commitments to a shared future.

One of the key predictors of success of an Education for Sustainability program in schools is the authentic project-based and place-based nature of the work of teachers and students in the context of their local community. Creating new patterns of relationships between schools and their communities that acknowledge Education for Sustainability as inextricable from sustainable community development is essential.

Students and teachers offer authentic contributions to sustainable community development through service learning opportunities, project-based, and place-based learning opportunities for students that are laterally and vertically embedded in the core curriculum. School buildings and grounds can serve the whole community as learning hubs for continuing education of individuals as well as school and community stakeholders to learn together for the future they want.

Policies & Actions

Recommendations:



• **Rural/Urban: Access to technology and internet for all students**

Students in both rural, suburban, and urban areas require robust broadband access in order to engage in remote learning during periods of covid-19 school closure, as well as during traditional face-to-face learning in the 21st century. This increase in access and the resulting speed and strength of signal can be addressed through a number of strategies:



- Communities can leverage the renewal of municipal broadband or cable television contracts to provide additional access to the community or, at the very least, to homes with K-12 students to expand and strengthen the current availability of broadband access;
- Communities can consider the provision of broadband access through locally-owned, school-owned, or municipally-owned "closed networks", possibly through the use of cell towers to provide broadband access to outlying rural areas.



• **Computers/Tablets**

Schools can and should consider the provision of devices to students for equitable access to broadband in order to support and enhance instruction, with the budget support from local, state, and/or other funding sources:

- Schools can seek resources through their annual budgets to provide a device to every student for use in the school and/or home, a 1:1 computing program;
- Schools can allow students to supply their own devices and to bring them to school to access the school's internet connection, on a daily or as-needed basis, supplemented with school district devices as needed, through a BYOD ("bring-your-own-device") program to be able to access broadband;
- Either of these approaches could be implemented incrementally, perhaps starting in high school and work toward elementary school implementation, by school or by grade level, as a strategy for addressing this goal, with equitable implementation, application, and distribution of resources in mind.



• **Communities serve as resources to the schools.**

Local community-based organizations, service organizations, government agencies, boys and girls clubs, businesses, elder-hostels, parks and reserves, state and national forests, residential centers, nature centers, zoos, museums, 4-H clubs, scouting organizations, etc. provide:



- Internships and mentorships for students and faculty, as well as Independent and Curriculum-Based Learning Sites (case studies, learning journeys, research sites).
- Physical spaces for school and community stakeholders to learn and work together for the future they want.
- Physical spaces for school and community stakeholders to celebrate together.

- **School and communities learn and work together in partnership**

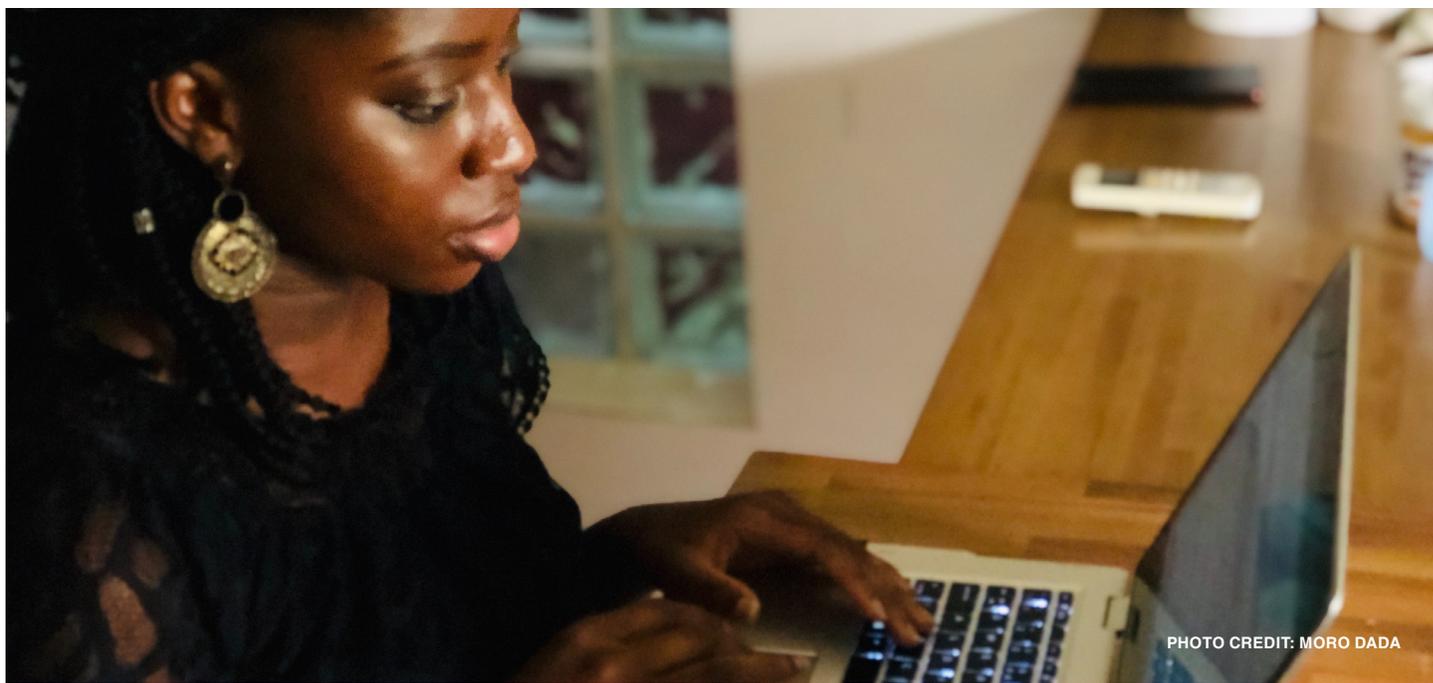
- Develop sustainable community visions and re-visions over time
- Ⓛ – Map community assets and conduct needs assessments.
- Consider and prepare for a range of potential future scenarios, while charting a course toward the preferred future
- Develop, measure, and monitor SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & time-bound) goals and sustainable community indicator sets. Schools' data is embedded in social, ecological and economic indicator sets.
- Co-design and implement short- and long-term projects and programs that are mutually beneficial to partners, are inclusive of all stakeholders and are participatory in nature. Evaluate progress and feedback, reflect, adjust, and continually improve performance.

- **Schools and communities celebrate and reflect together.**

- Regularly and publicly recognize and celebrate individual and collective successes, and progress toward green schools and sustainable community goals at events and in the media.
- Make time to reflect on where we are, how we got here, how far we have come, how close we are to where we are going, and what we are going to do next.

Resources

- [Green Schools National Network](#)
- [The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education](#)
- [USGBC Center for Green Schools](#)



Overview

State and local officials can bridge the digital divide while promoting rural economic development by investing in broadband access and enacting common-sense policy. Connecting the unconnected to this essential twenty-first-century infrastructure enables distance learning, remote work, telemedicine, and broad economic opportunities. A variety of models exist to connect rural, underserved, and unserved communities alike. Here are four state- and local-level recommendations that if implemented would help millions of Americans get connected.

Policies & Actions

Recommendations:

- ☆ • **Incentivize rural electric coops to provide broadband** - As of 2019, even by FCC conservative standards, 39% of rural areas did not have access to broadband as federally defined. While over 900 electric coops provide power in 47 states, covering 56% of the nation's landmass, only about 100 currently provide broadband services. Rural electric coops have the expertise - and their communities' trust - to rapidly connect unserved rural communities.

- ☆ • **Establish a statewide broadband definition** - A primary challenge in directing resources to expanding broadband access at the local and state level is the restrictive policy that results in undercounting in FCC statistics on coverage. Current FCC law says speed is determined by the fastest service in any one building in a census block. A uniform, inclusive, statewide definition would allow for accurate mapping of broadband availability.
 - **Lobby for federal changes** - The FCC should be pressured to use accurate data. The Federal ReConnect grant program limits projects to those communities where speed is slower than 10Mbps/1Mbps, which is far below the 25Mbps/3Mbps recommended for telemedicine, video streaming, and online coursework. Over \$600 million is allocated for these projects federally, but a feasibility study in Mississippi found that cooperatives there would need over \$1.6 billion to serve the home of every member.

- ☆ • **Utilize education networks to create digital jobs** - State educational networks, universities, colleges, and vocational-technical systems should be incentivized to increase broadband access in their communities and serve as training centers for cyber jobs. These jobs, which can often be completed remotely with stable, secure broadband access, are in-demand and well-compensated. ▼

- ① • **Allow, support, and establish municipally owned broadband networks -**
Over 500 communities have invested in creative public networks and over 300 of these communities are served by a cooperative, providing essential access to Americans and healthy competition to internet service providers. However, 25 states have laws on the books that ban or significantly impede municipally-owned broadband networks, affecting over 11 million Americans currently unconnected in those states. Municipal networks in communities such as Virginia Beach, Longmont, CO, Chattanooga, and Portland, OR are providing long-term value for governments, businesses, and citizens alike.

Resources

- Additional resources can be found through the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and Community Broadband Networks.
- BroadbandNow
- Federal Broadband Definition: 25Mbps/3Mbps
- Next Century City
- PEW Trusts





Overview

Transportation is now the largest emitter of GHG emissions & unhealthy air, and the state and local government costs to build and maintain the infrastructure to support internal combustion engine (ICE) auto travel are among the biggest and least productive parts of their budgets. We should speed transition away from ICE-based mobility toward less motor vehicle travel and toward cleaner and more productive forms.

Policies & Actions

Guiding Principles:

- Fix it first. Immediately stop building new facilities for ICE-based mobility, limiting all expenditure to maintenance and multi-modal enhancements.
- Make costs and unfairness clear. Along with destroying our commons, our existing systems rest on a series of subsidies from under-users to over-users.
- Design for equity and productivity. Build equity into mobility design solutions, with a primary focus on remedying the structural harm inflicted on environmental justice (EJ) and low-to-moderate income (LMI) communities, and lowering the cost of living.
- Optimize mobility solutions for sustainability and resilience through:
 - Transitioning public and school bus and corporate fleets to EVs.
 - Walking and shared mobility for both people and goods movement.
 - More compact, mixed-use development with green infrastructure, including pedestrian and bike-friendly development.
 - Design solutions that better align with mobility purposes and promote location efficiency. (15% commuting, 85% errands)
- Fossil fuel prices must reflect their true cost; incentivize the development of clean, renewable alternatives, including fuel cells and advanced energy storage/battery technology.
- Public investment in carbon-based transportation infrastructure must stop and be redirected toward creating a redesigned mobility system.

Recommendations:

- ☆ • Reward trip reduction and vehicle-miles-traveled reduction. (Near-term)
- ☆ • Cease all fossil fuel-related subsidies and incentives. (Near-term)
- ☆ • Mandate that the price of fossil fuels reflect their true costs. (Intermediate-term) ▼

- Carbon fee and dividend.
- Cap and trade system. (like that proposed in the Transportation & Climate Initiative)
- Use fees raised to help build out a redesigned mobility system.
- ☆ • Implement EV legislation like that recently passed by NJ that concurrently stimulates both demand and supply for EVs. (Near-term)
 - \$5k “cash on the hood” rebates for lease/sale of EV below \$55k.
 - Mandate and invest in expansion of EV charging stations at strategic locations (office complexes, public buildings and lots, multi-family housing developments, etc.).
 - Require transition of public bus fleets and school buses from diesel to electric, with urban and EJ communities being a priority. (Mandate near-term; Implementation long-term)
- ☆ • Tax credits for companies who re-engineer to build an EV supply chain. (Near-term)
- Coordinate the above with complementary clean energy and sustainable/resilient land use policy interventions. (Intermediate/long-term)
- ☆ • Invest in job training and apprenticeship programs for EV skills – especially in EJ communities. (Intermediate-term)
- Ⓛ • Invest in charging stations in downtown shopping areas, public libraries, and multi-family housing developments.
- Ⓛ • Transition municipal fleets to electric vehicles, particularly maintenance trucks, police and emergency vehicles, trash and recycling trucks.
- Ⓛ • Convert select downtown streets to pedestrian-only zones, and allocate outdoor space to restaurants in order to expand capacity while maintaining social distancing. (Near-term)

Resources

- [COWS](#)
- [New Jersey's new Electric Vehicle Law: ChargeEVC](#)
- [The Center for Neighborhood Technology](#)
- [Transportation Climate Initiative](#)
- [State Smart Transportation Initiative](#)