

Revised Charter - DOT Center for Climate Change and Environmental Forecasting
October 22, 2004

NEED

Scientists generally agree that the earth's climate is warming, due in part to increasing levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the earth's atmosphere. Transportation is a major source of GHGs and is the Nation's fastest growing source of GHGs. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its operating administrations must analyze and influence emerging GHG emissions reduction policies and strategies that will affect transportation providers and consumers.

Climate change may also affect the Nation's transportation system, through more frequent weather disruptions, changes in infrastructure life, rising sea levels, and other impacts. These potential impacts need to be understood so that DOT and its operating administrations can develop strategies to protect the Nation's investments in the transportation system.

Climate change involves challenges across DOT's operating administrations and transcends the Department's traditional structure. Climate change calls for coordinated approaches to support DOT's participation in national and international efforts to address climate change.

VISION

The DOT Center for Climate Change and Environmental Forecasting advances measures that increase transportation energy efficiency and reduce GHG emissions, improve understanding of the potential impacts of climate change on transportation, and enables DOT and its operating administrations to effectively participate in domestic and international climate change policy activities.

MISSION

The Center provides a unifying structure for DOT's actions and policies that address climate change issues within a multi-modal context. The Center is the focal point in DOT for information sharing and multimodal technical expertise on transportation and climate change. Through coordination of ongoing research within the operating administrations, new strategic research, policy analysis, partnerships, and outreach, the Center encourages multi-modal approaches to increase transportation energy efficiency and reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and to reduce the impacts of climate change on transportation.

GOALS

GOAL 1: To ensure a unified DOT voice in domestic and international climate change policy activities, including administration initiatives and relevant international treaties.

GOAL 2: To improve DOT's capacity to address issues related to climate change concerns through information and support for approaches that promote energy-efficient and sustainable transportation services that allow growth to meet mobility needs.

GOAL 3: To enable the transportation sector to efficiently meet the Nation's mobility needs while contributing to national goals and commitments for reductions in GHG emissions.

GOAL 4: To ensure that the Nation's transportation systems are prepared to address the potential long-range effects of global climate change.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1: Establish Leadership on Transportation and Climate Change Issues

Establish the Center as a respected and credible resource of information, data, technical assistance, and policy guidance regarding climate-related transportation issues, serving and working in partnership with DOT administrations, other Federal agencies, Congress, State/local transportation agencies, stakeholders, and the public. Supports all goals.

STRATEGY 2: Coordinate Departmental Activities on Climate Change

Encourage coordinated approaches and information sharing about ongoing Departmental activities in order to identify and fill gaps in the Department's efforts, prevent duplicative efforts, and seek to leverage expertise and resources between modes, and for reporting to and coordinating with crosscutting Administration programs. Ensure that transportation issues and concerns are represented in national and international policy discussions and forums on climate change. Supports goals one, two, and four.

STRATEGY 3: Research and Evaluate Transportation Strategies to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Identify, evaluate, and promote transportation measures, supported by sound data, that will increase transportation energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation sources in cost beneficial ways. Supports goals two and three.

STRATEGY 4: Prepare for Potential Effects of Climate Change on the Transportation System

Develop an understanding of potential long-range effects of global climate change on the Nation's transportation systems, and foster strategies to avoid, reduce, mitigate, or adapt to negative effects. Supports goals two and four.

STRATEGY 5: Participate in International Climate Change Policy Assessment

Advise the Department of State for DOT in the development of international measures that are consistent with DOT's strategic goals. Analyze and participate in, as appropriate, activities undertaken by other countries to promote efficient transportation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Supports goals one, two, and three.

STRATEGY 6: Ensure Ongoing Leadership, Staffing, and Resources

Ensure that the Center, DOT, and its operating administrations have the ongoing leadership, staffing, and resources necessary to effectively achieve Departmental objectives. Supports all goals.

ORGANIZATION: A ONE-DOT VIRTUAL CENTER

The Center functions as a department-wide virtual organization, led by a Steering Committee comprised of executive-level representatives from seven operating administrations and the Office of the Secretary. This charter includes the following operating administrations and their successors:

The Federal Aviation Administration
The Federal Highway Administration
The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
The Federal Railroad Administration
The Federal Transit Administration
The Maritime Administration
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
The Research and Special Programs Administration

The Steering Committee is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Office of Transportation Policy. A cross-modal, virtual structure ensures multimodal involvement while avoiding unnecessary administrative and institutional costs.

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) will support the Center with data, analysis, technical expertise and consulting consistent with its mission to advance the use of objective information for decision making. BTS will not participate in policy decision making or program advocacy through the Center.

Operating administrations support the Center's work through contributions of funds, staffing, and technical expertise, and by participating in Center efforts to share information, build partnerships, and coordinate activities related to climate change. The funding contribution from each mode will ultimately depend on Congressional authorization and accompanying appropriations for this activity in each operating administration.

The Steering Committee will establish funding targets for the Center on a five-year cycle, to be reviewed and updated every year. The Steering Committee will prepare an Action Plan. The Steering Committee will prepare an Action Plan detailing spending priorities, timelines, Core Staff responsibilities, and specifying appropriate staffing and supportive administrative systems for each fiscal year no later than October 30 of that fiscal year. The Chair will brief modal Administrators on the activities of the Center as appropriate, not less than once per fiscal year.