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STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 2209
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4121
FAX (916) 445-2209

The Road to 2020 and Beyond: The Role of the Transportation Sector in Meeting California's Climate Goals March 17, 2015

Hearing Summary

On March 17, 2015, the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee and the Senate Environmental Quality Committee held a joint oversight hearing to examine existing and newly developed programs designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from the transportation sector.

As evidence for man-made climate change has mounted over the last few decades, the state has aimed to mitigate global warming impacts by implementing policies to reduce GHGs. Because the transportation sector is responsible for 38% of state's total GHG emissions, many of these programs target GHG emissions from that sector.

Representatives from the California Environmental Protection Agency, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), and the California Energy Commission testified that the agencies and departments are working together closely on both existing and newly created transportation emission reduction programs. For example, the state Air Resources Board is setting guidelines to help standardize how all the agencies handle the statutory requirement that a portion of cap-and-trade funds benefit disadvantaged communities, and the Climate Action Team is coordinating efforts across agencies.

Several advocates discussed the need to fund the state's Active Transportation Program (ATP). ATP, established in the 2013-14 budget, consolidates multiple state and federal

bicycle- and pedestrian-related programs. In addition to mobility goals, ATP aims to further GHG reductions by getting people out of cars by, for example, encouraging them to walk or bike, rather than drive, the “last mile” to or from a transit station. CalSTA noted that 30% of trips in California are less than one mile.

Several advocates testified to the need to bring all levels of Caltrans into the mindset of establishing a sustainable transportation system, and to ensure that goods movement is fully integrated into such a system. CalSTA noted that the draft California Transportation Plan 2040, an effort headed by Caltrans, aims to identify a statewide, integrated, multimodal transportation system to reach maximum feasible GHG reductions.

Representatives from the petroleum industry expressed concern about “sector-specific” strategies such as the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, recommending instead that the state focus on “market” strategies such as the cap-and-trade auctions. These representatives also cautioned against relying on fuels that are not yet commercially available, while possibly compromising the reliable supply of conventional fuels.

The background paper for the hearing provides an overview of AB 32: The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the cap-and-trade program, and programs addressing transportation-related emissions. This paper, along with witness testimony and handouts, is posted on the Transportation and Housing Committee website at <http://stran.senate.ca.gov/content/oversight-hearings>.